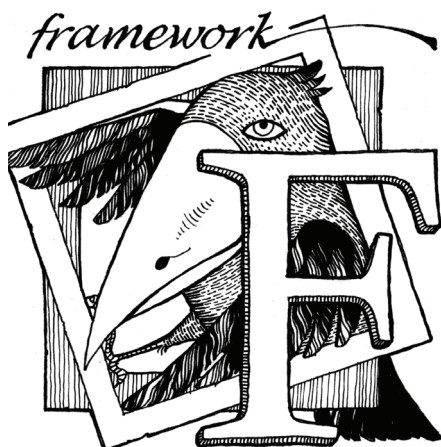


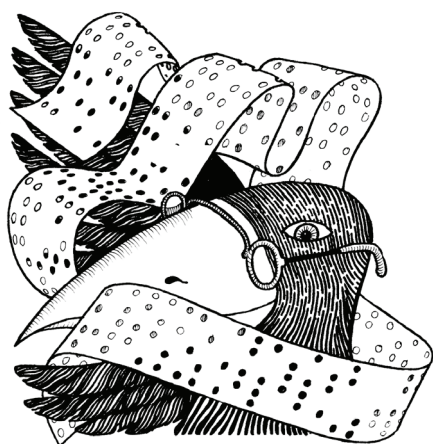
“Whether we are based on carbon or on silicon makes no fundamental difference; we should each be treated with appropriate respect.”

— Arthur C. Clarke



The fortieth issue is devoted to introducing new colleagues, as most of our December issues lately, focusing on the postdoctoral fellows who join HSE in September, but this time we do it with a twist. In this issue we start with an interview with the youngest HSE staff member who joined the university during the summer months - Isaac the Robot, who helps the administration and researchers alike with the Research Productivity Assessment. Of course, postdocs themselves get the spotlight as well, and we are delighted to tell about their research interests through the interviews with colleagues working in three different fields – Hye Won Kwon in social sciences, Maria Sole Continiello Neri in international law, and Natalia Lyskova in physics. Last but not least, this issue’s column “Discovering HSE and Russia” by Sawada Tadamasa explores the questions of authenticity and cultural exchange using the example of Japanese restaurants in Moscow, and invites the readers to reframe their experience.

Director of Internationalisation
Yulia Grinkevich



‘While HSE Sleeps, I Work’: Interview with Isaac the Robot

In December 2017 *The HSE Look* took an interview with **Dmitry Dagaev** about the changes to the HSE Research Productivity Assessment, and one of the novelties was a shift from a manual check to an automated solution. Early this summer, the HSE community was surprised to learn about its newest colleague: a robot helper named Isaac tasked with recording and scoring the publications by researchers and faculty. Isaac is constantly learning to improve its algorithms and interface, and now that it’s learned English, we are happy to share with *The HSE Look* readers the exclusive interview with Isaac taken by *Okna Rosta*, where he talks about his functions and even offers some words of advice.

Please tell us about the history behind your interesting name.

I was named Isaac in honour of the famed science fiction writer, professor of Boston University and popular science advocate Isaac Asimov (1920-1992). His works were often concerned with the influence that artificial intelligence might have on human life and civilization. In his story Runaround, Asimov presented his Three Laws of Robotics, which tell us how robots should improve the lives of people:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being come to harm;
2. A robot must obey all orders given to it by humans, unless such orders conflict with the First law;
3. A robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First and Second laws.

Asimov dealt with these ideas in his works, as he often analyzed what happens when progress threatens humanity, as well as what happens when these aforementioned laws are violated. I am pleased and very grateful to have been named in honour of this great writer.

This is your first year at HSE.

What's your job description as an HSE staff member?

I am HSE's youngest employee! I was first conceived of a year ago, but I only came to life and started working here in June 2018. My main job is providing assistance in assessments of research productivity of HSE staff members. I wouldn't be able to do this without the help of my colleagues: both researchers and teachers, who regularly submit their publications to the HSE portal's database right after completing them. I am also helped by my colleagues from the Publications Verification Unit, who carefully check all information, as well as provide me with access to this information. I also work closely with programmers and developers, who help me a lot when I face problems and challenges. Furthermore, HSE's Scientometrics Centre are a great help, as they provide me with access to databases on Scopus and WoS-indexed journals, quartiles, supplementary journal lists and other important information. Without it, I couldn't operate at all.

My main purpose is to make sure that all information is properly and accurately recorded. My work is not affected by human error, and I am completely neutral in personal, institutional and disciplinary terms. I am capable of processing enormous volumes of data 24/7, without lifting a hand. Every day, I review all personal pages of HSE staff several times and update their scores. I especially love to work nights. When HSE sleeps, I work.

Some people might approach the appearance of a robot colleague with mixed feelings and trepidation. In your view, are these fears justified?

In my view, any innovation is usually greeted with some alarm and anxiety. My purpose here is to prove that things are better with me than without me. In fact, I've already received some nice messages from my HSE colleagues, since, thanks to me, it is now possible to view one's scoring at an earlier stage, instead of being afraid of some unpredictable outcomes. After I started working, some mistakes have been made, but I am still learning. Furthermore, it's my aim to adjust to my role as quickly as possible, as well as prevent any deviations from my core algorithms.

What are your most challenging tasks?

Perhaps, the most difficult thing is that it's a process which requires a lot of work both with data and with people. On the one hand, we are eager to follow all formal procedures in place for assessing research productivity. This requires recording such data as the year when an HSE staff member was hired, as well as making sure that affiliations are properly included. Publications that appeared during an HSE staff member's first year of employment can be accepted without affiliation. However, issues sometimes emerge in regards to how to take account of rehiring and two-week breaks in the activities of staff members. Many of these issues had to be resolved for the first time, so as to then create a precedent and account for it in my algorithms. Such difficulties appear when we try to follow regulations to the letter, while also trying not to violate the spirit of Asimov's laws of robotics.

The second substantial challenge is that my colleagues and I are very eager to make this process comfortable for HSE researchers and for the heads of departments and subdivisions responsible for making decisions on the basis of information provided for the Research Productivity Assessment. Therefore, we strive to devise new services in response to the requests we receive. For instance, department and laboratory heads want to access information about Research Productivity Assessment of all their employees with a single click rather than look through their profiles one by one, and we've added such a feature to the interface.

There are also other issues related to integrating this procedure into regular life at HSE. I think that, within one or two years, this process will be further adapted to the needs of the university and its researchers. We will carefully analyze the experiences we gain during the first large-scale campaign to assess research productivity in December 2018. We will base our future actions on this experience.

Please tell us about the typical problems you encounter on a daily basis?

I would put all problems into two categories. The first type may include issues regarding the assessment of individual publications. This kind of situation comes up quite regularly since the document cards that were around at HSE before me sometimes didn't include key information needed for verifying a given publication, and, therefore, now I cannot process such an entry. In these cases, we often recommend that staff members add all necessary information. Usually, this type of problem then resolves itself.

The second type of request usually concerns quite specific points in the rules for assessing research productivity at HSE. Some of them cannot always be interpreted in straightforward and algorithmic way, so I resort to the help of human colleagues. In such instances, we settle this kind of issue on a case-by-case basis. Thankfully, these are isolated situations and not a widespread problem. At present, I have yet to experience any serious problems in regards to my duties that couldn't be effectively solved.

What advice might you give to those undergoing RPA this year?

My first piece of advice is to keep the information about your publications up to date. As soon as your paper has been published, I kindly ask you to upload it via your personal page to the HSE portal. This is useful for all involved: not only for me and my work, but also so that the academic community can quickly find out about your new research findings as soon as possible.

My next piece of advice would be to carefully choose the journal for your publication. In fact, more than once I have found publications on personal profiles that appeared in journals, which have long been blacklisted.

I hope to be working here at HSE for a long time. I like it here! You can always write me at the contacts provided on my personal page. Together, we are focused on one key objective: making sure that HSE is a comfortable place to work for all researchers, teachers and administrators. And I am here to do my best so that you are happier working with me than without me.

Welcome Aboard: Postdoctoral Fellows at HSE

This year over 40 international postdocs are staying at HSE for the 1st or 2nd year to do their research in a variety of fields: economics, decision-making, law, social sciences, neuropsychology, mathematics, computer science, physics, international relations, humanities – the list is huge, and would not do justice to presenting the projects each of the postdocs is pursuing. In this issue we are delighted to introduce three researchers who work in different areas, with more interviews to follow in the first issue of 2019.



Doing Cross-Cultural Research in Moscow

Hye Won Kwon, Research Fellow at the Laboratory for Comparative Social Research, talked to The HSE Look about her experience of living in Moscow and how it enriches her research.

What are your research interests?

My research is interdisciplinary, and is at the intersection of sociology, psychology and cross-cultural research. Broadly speaking, I am interested in how culture and social structure shape individual psychology. Too often, individual psychology is treated as idiosyncratic and variation among people is too rarely tied to social

structures. I collect and analyze survey data from different nations to study how stratification is reproduced through psychological functioning across cultures.

As one example of psychological resources, my dissertation examines the sociological utility of the popular psychological concept, “grit” (i.e., perseverance and passion towards long-term life goals) above

other established subjective measures of individual orientations to stratification across cultures. Psychologists, educators and parents are interested in this concept because it's been shown to be a strong predictor of better life outcomes including subjective wellbeing and academic success. However, grit research has been conducted mostly in psychology and in a single nation (e.g., the U.S.). Grit has been studied in a contextual vacuum, as grit researchers are less interested in exploring social structural and cultural contexts of grit's development. My dissertation project adds sociological and comparative angles to it, to see how the findings hold across different cultures, using cross-cultural survey data collected from the U.S. and South Korea, often thought to be on the opposite ends of the individualism vs. collectivism scale.

Has your stay at HSE been productive so far in terms of making new academic connections?

At my previous university few people were doing cross-cultural research, while the Laboratory for Comparative Social Research (LCSR) specifically focuses on comparative studies. Even through short conversations with my lab colleagues and supervisors I get the help that I need in terms of improving my methodology and analysing the project results. It's been only 2.5 months but I've already learned a lot about the tools and the issues that I need to consider in developing comparative projects. I strongly believe that my stay at HSE and my affiliation with LCSR help me further develop my own research projects as well as my collaborative projects with other co-authors.

What are your plans for this year as a postdoc? What would make it a successful year for you?

One of the manuscripts based on my dissertation about grit is currently under review, and I'm working on several more for publication. My immediate plan includes examining the social valuation of grit across cultures: Is grit a valued virtue across cultures? Is an individual's social structural and cultural location associated with how much she or he values grit as a virtue? I am currently revising my dissertation chapter on this and analyzing existing international survey data (e.g., World Values Survey, which is affiliated with the LCSR). At the LCSR, I recently started my new research on socioeconomic status,

human agency and subjective wellbeing, and a meeting with our international director, **Christian Welzel**, really helped me to move forward. I am hoping to present my preliminary findings from this project at our April conference next year.

In addition to these projects, I'm doing another cross-cultural project with collaborators in the United States to study how people use values to draw group boundaries between "us" (in-group) and "them" (out-group). We collected survey data from four countries - USA, South Korea, France and Turkey, and are currently analysing the results. One co-authored paper has been accepted this month, and we are planning to submit two more manuscripts to the journals early next year.

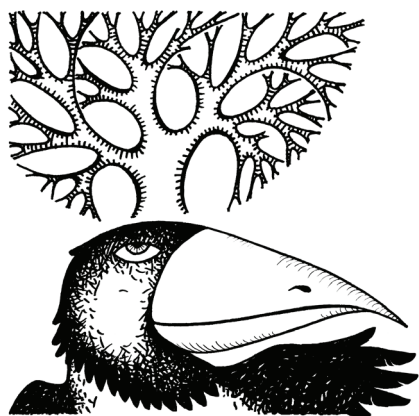
Also, as a cross-cultural researcher I find that the experience of living in a different culture is really helpful in broadening my perspective - and also inspiring. I hope to learn more about Russian culture and language.

What is your favourite thing to do in Moscow?

I first came to Moscow back in 2015 for a conference organised by LCSR, and I am very happy to be back here. I feel like one year is too short to enjoy this beautiful city. I really try to make time - a day or a half day - to go to an art museum, or attend a musical performance and such. I love exploring local markets and tasting food from around the world. I went to Kolomensky park to buy some honey earlier this fall, and I wish I bought more jars so that I could bring it to my family on a holiday visit to South Korea.

Do you participate in any events at HSE?

Regarding research, there's a regular seminar led by our laboratory happening weekly, and I'm also keeping my eye on the email announcements sent by other institutes and labs, just in case I find a research presentation that speaks to my interests. If we talk about social events, I really enjoyed the events organised by the International Faculty Support Unit. I found them very helpful in meeting other postdocs and tenure-tracks, and I made several friends with whom we hang out quite often. And I think it's quite important to make connections in a new place where you do not have any family or friends, which are the usual support systems we have 'at home', especially when you do not speak the local language very well.



Aftermath of Armed Conflicts for Civilians: a Human Rights Perspectives

Maria Sole Continiello Neri, Research Fellow at the Centre of Comparative Law, Faculty of Law, shared how her academic work is related to current challenges in human rights protection, and how close collaboration with colleagues on teaching helps to build research connections.

As a lawyer why did you choose an academic career?

I specialise in Public International Law, specifically in human rights law and international humanitarian law. During my bachelor degree, I focused on constitutional law in Italy, while I obtained my master in Public International Law, and my Ph.D. was about human rights during military occupation and armed conflict. Jointly with the academic career, I developed my professional skills practicing as a lawyer, international consultant and doing fieldwork. I worked for the Red Cross in Italy, at a center which works with refugee-seekers, and also for the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation of the European Commission. My research is aimed at analysing the emerging challenges to international law and I am honored to contribute as an academic to the ongoing debate about human rights not only in the academic but also in the professional community.

What are your research interests?

In March 2018, I published my first book which analyses the participation of Italian Armed forces in peacekeeping operations. It's been an important milestone for me. Currently, I am working on three main topics.

My first project is focused on how socio-economic rights of the population are affected during military occupation. Through my research I would like to assess the adequacy of the classic military occupation regime regarding the challenges posed by securing the first, second and third generation of human rights during such a particular context. My second project is about the Russian Refugee Law and the principle of non-refoulement that forbids a country to return asylum-seekers to a country where they would be in danger of prosecution based on belonging to a social or political group. Analysing and comparing the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on the issue I assessed how the principle of non-

refoulement is adhered to in Russia. I chose specific groups of refugees affected by military conflict, namely Syrian, Afghani and Yemeni refugees. This project is the one that I devote most time and effort at the moment. I gave one plenary lecture on this topic at a conference in Nizhny Novgorod, and I published two articles which are due to appear in print in 2019.

The third research issue has been my dream project since I started my PhD, and it's about the use of autonomous weapons during armed conflict. These types of weapons, once activated, can select and attack targets without human intervention, and there are many legal implications of that (e.g. potential conflict with the right to life). Even if these projects might seem unrelated at first sight, there's an underlying red thread that ties all the subjects: how human rights are affected by the armed conflict. To sum up, all of my research projects relate to a broader issue of the consequences of war for civilians in the conflict's aftermath and during military occupation.

How does your stay at HSE help to develop your research?

I have met a lot of colleagues who are both outstanding researchers and teachers, like **Vladislav Starzhenetsky**, who is the first vice-dean of the HSE Faculty of Law and professor of International Economic Law and Intellectual Property Law. He has been of incredible support and help, both in academic and administrative matters. Professors **Vera Rusinova**, **Anita Soboleva**, **Daria Boklan** which are leading experts in Public International Law and Human Rights Law. They supported me with academic advice and tips to improve my teaching and researching activities. Overall, the environment at HSE is really kind and supportive. Regarding university resources, I really like the workshops organized by the Academic Writing Centre. I regularly attend the seminars at the Faculty of Law and of the Migration center at the HSE Political Science Faculty, and also visit events outside HSE, for example, at Sakharov Centre.

Do you work with human rights NGOs in Russia a lot on your topic?

Civic Assistance Committee is the primary one for me regarding the topic of refugees, and I use a lot of their documents. However, the main problem is my basic knowledge of Russian, so I cannot volunteer for them as I would love to. Nevertheless, my first article to be published here, as a follow-up to the conference in Nizhniy Novgorod, will be in Russian. It addresses the issues relevant to the country's legal and human rights professional communities, and it feels right to publish it in the language which would make it more accessible to the wider audience here.

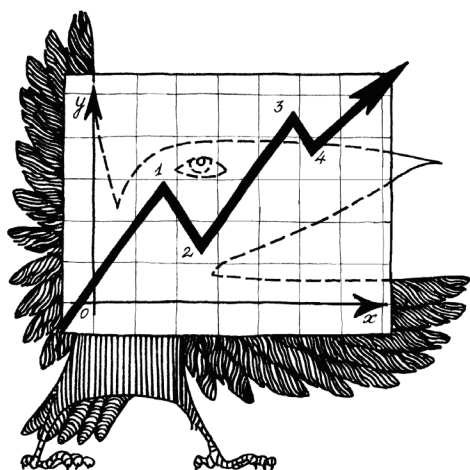
It's your second year at HSE, have you had a chance to teach yet?

Last year I had a great opportunity to teach one course on human rights together with Anita Soboleva, and two seminars of 36 hours each on international law. The department announced the

opportunity to take a research seminar in international public law in English - and to our great surprise over 150 students signed up. We ended up doing a pre-selection so that students could not only attend the class but participate proactively. At the end, there were 90 students, and since it's a seminar, we had split them into two groups, and overall it's been a challenging but very rewarding experience.

Do you have any favourite places in Moscow?

My husband is also a researcher at HSE, and he first visited Moscow in 2012, so by the time I arrived I already had plenty of recommendations to explore. My favourite museum is Multimedia Art Museum, there are several restaurants that I like - of course, while internet reviews are of great help, it is very useful to rely on a spouse's or friend's knowledge of the city so as not to get lost, because Moscow is vast and has a lot to offer. This year I've met a lot of new postdocs at the social events at the beginning of the year, and we have a group of about 20 people who meet regularly.



In a Galaxy Far, Far Away

Natalia Lyiskova is spending her 2nd year as a postdoc at HSE Faculty of Physics working in a Joint Department of Space Physics with the Space Research Institute at the Russian Academy of Sciences. The HSE Look talked to her about the ongoing research and upcoming plans.

What are your research interests?

I am a big fan of astrophysics. My research is mainly focused on extragalactic physics, it means that I study objects far away from our Galaxy, among them you can find distant elliptical galaxies or even clusters of galaxies. I concentrate on different physical phenomena which happen in distant galaxies/clusters. One of the tools we use to study these objects is gravitational lensing. It is an astrophysical effect when the light travelling from a distant source changes its trajectory due to the gravity from the cluster of galaxies, for example. My master thesis was devoted to gravitational lensing. Maybe it's a reason why I'm keen on it - gravitational lensing

was my first love, I'll never forget it. Also, with the help of this phenomenon, we can study mass distribution in the galaxy clusters or in elliptical galaxies, and use the results of this analysis, for instance, in cosmology to derive the properties of our Universe as a whole. To put it in a nutshell, I focus on large scales and large objects in space.

Do you work with other teams' data or do you collect it yourself as well?

I'm glad you asked, since it's one of the reasons why I applied for a position in Moscow. Normally, we use data from existing space

telescopes (like XMM-Newton or Chandra X-Ray Observatory), but all of them are European, Japanese or American. We have access to INTEGRAL (International Gamma Ray Astrophysics Laboratory) data because Russia helped to launch it, but next year we expect to have a satellite telescope of our own thanks to a joint Russian-German project. The exciting thing about it is that we are going to have lots of new data to analyse rather than following up on the work done by others. It's going to be an X-Ray telescope, thus, it needs to be launched on a satellite. It will be able to do surveys, meaning that we will get an opportunity to observe all the sky and detect, for example, all clusters of galaxies above a certain mass. In this case, we can reach more conclusive results about cosmology, because we will have a more representative sample of objects rather than rely only on partial data (e.g. from most luminous objects). And as far as I remember, the most recent surveys in the medium energy X-ray range were done around 20 years ago, and a lot has changed and improved in the sensitivity of the telescopes.

You are organising a conference in December, could you tell more about it?

It's an annual conference on high-energy astrophysics organised by the Space Research Institute of RAS. The conference is held in Russia, and there are a lot of participants from other countries and international research centers, so it offers a good chance to learn about the latest research results as well as plans from colleagues across the world. For instance, we expect Peter Predehl from Germany, as well as other scientists who are working on the joint telescope project. Personally, for me it's a great opportunity to meet my friends with whom we studied in Germany several years

ago and who currently live and work in different places, such as Finland, USA, UK, Germany, etc.

Do you participate in any events at HSE – open lectures, seminars, discussion groups?

I gave a couple of talks - one at the HSE Festival of Science Lunokhod-1 and one at the open lectorium organised by the Faculty of Physics. They were popular talks about a recent breakthrough in astrophysics and physics in general, and it's been an interesting challenge for me to convey these ideas to a general audience that does not have an in-depth knowledge of physics, but I enjoyed it very much. When you try to explain in simple words what you are actually doing as a scientist, it's not easy, and it's very rewarding to get relevant questions from the audience which show that they really understand the essence of the issue. Also, I had a chance to walk around the festival a bit, and was really impressed because many students were there to learn and try something new.

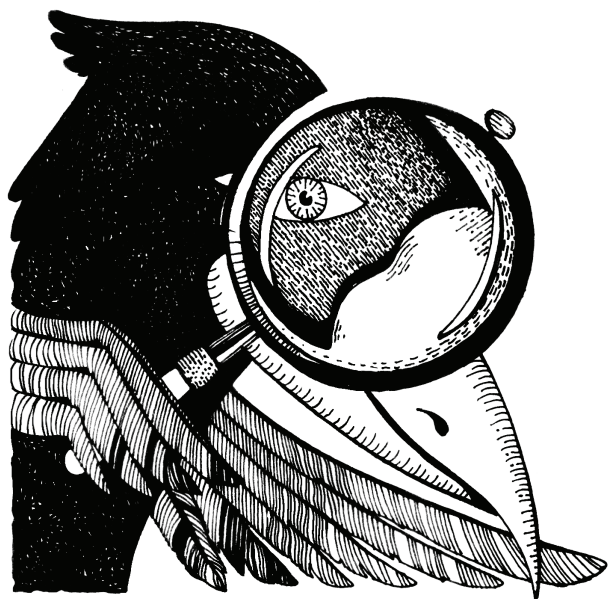
What are your plans for this year as a postdoc?

Normally, I have three to five ongoing projects, and I need to finish them before the new telescope starts working full-power, so that I could then get fully immersed in working with the new data. I did not yet have a chance to take up teaching any courses at the Faculty, but I am thinking about this for the next academic year. On the one hand, you have to invest a lot of time in preparing the lectures and checking the course assignments, on the other hand, teaching has its own advantages and rewards.



Discovering HSE and Russia

In addition to interviews with international faculty, *The HSE Look* has launched 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. In this issue, we present a column by **Sawada Tadamasu**, Assistant Professor at the School of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences. His research is focused on mathematical psychology, visual perception, and modeling in vision science.



Delicious Lies

by Sawada Tadamasa

Since I left Japan, I have lived in the USA for 8 years and now live in Russia. Occasionally, people from both countries ask me about the quality of the “Japanese” restaurants in Russia or in the USA. It is always easy to reply by saying that they are not sufficiently authentic, and that they cannot be called “Japanese” restaurants, and then go on to point out every detailed difference between these dishes and authentic Japanese versions. But, do they really have to be authentic?

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Replicating Japanese dishes is difficult outside of Japan because their ingredients may not be available or can taste different in different countries, particularly, vegetables and fish, even meat. For example, eggplants can be found easily on the shelves in supermarkets both in Japan and in the USA (also in Russia), but this does not mean you can simply cook some simple Japanese eggplant dishes with the eggplants you can buy in the USA because eggplants in the USA usually have a much thicker skin than the eggplants in Japan.

The skin of the eggplant will not melt in your mouth if you cook an American eggplant the same way you cook one in Japan. Now, consider ocean (salt water) fishes. Some travel in the ocean seasonally and come to the coastal areas of Japan and to the west coast of the USA in very different seasons. Some ocean fish that taste great in Japan are not well-regarded in other countries maybe because of time within their reproductive cycles they come to their coastal areas (e.g. pacific-saury).

Some fish live only in the Atlantic Ocean or in the Pacific Ocean, not in both, and such fish will suffer if eaten raw after having been carried across the Eurasian or American continents. Even meat can be different. You can easily find paper-thin sliced beef and pork in Japan but not in Russia or in the USA. Good beef in Japan tends to be fatty (like Kobe beef) while it is difficult to find good red beef there. Japanese people commonly eat raw egg and the supply route for eggs in Japan is designed to do this safely. A Japanese

mixed-spice “shichimi” is illegal in some other countries because it includes roasted (deactivated) cannabis seeds.

Now let’s think about the Chinese dishes served in many “Chinese” restaurants in Japan. Most of them are far from being authentic. This discrepancy can be attributed to a specific Chinese chef, Chen Kenmin. He arranged Chinese dishes for Japanese customers and his recipes became the standard for Chinese dishes in Japan. His quote says “my Chinese dishes are with little lies but they are good lies, delicious lies.”

The same thing also happens to the Japanese, Russian and American dishes. Some Japanese restaurants in Russia serve a larger variety of sushi with pickled fish (e.g. pickled herring) than the most common sushi restaurants in Japan do. I have never seen sushi with pickled herring in Japan but it is impossible not to note that it tastes good. Also, a “California roll” (a sushi roll with avocado) in the USA is an American invention but it is becoming popular in Japan, too. But, note well that a California roll tastes better in the USA than in Japan because of the superior quality of the American avocado. Please don’t expect to find good borscht in Japan. Borscht needs beets but beets are rare in Japan. Instead of making borscht with beets, some restaurants try to imitate their flavor by using white turnips. It may taste good but it doesn’t taste like real Russian borscht. So, we can always complain about the dishes of our own countries when served in different countries, but it makes much more sense to enjoy these “delicious lies”.