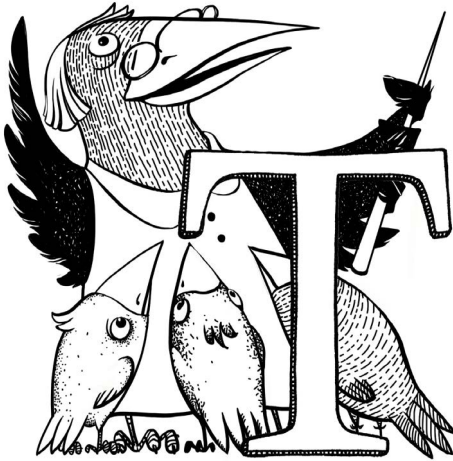




'Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice.'

— Anton Chekhov



here is no value in an academic institution unless it provides knowledge and capabilities that help students succeed. And HSE campuses know this very well - they leverage worldwide academic standards while being aware of local needs. With the first issue of 2022, we would like to look closer at HSE Perm, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year and is a fine example of how project-based learning must be implemented - this campus provides "hands-on" experience with real-world projects, as well as relevant training at its various laboratories.

The Director of HSE Perm, Galina Volodina, opens up this issue, discussing the role the campus plays in developing general education in the region, as well as retaining local talent. Furthermore, Deputy Director Elena Shadrina further talks about the research the campus laboratories do and about their international teams. Aleksey Kychkin comments on project-based learning and commercial research, while Dinara Gagarina highlights the importance of digital methods for the humanities. In turn, Dr. Dmitri Vinogradov, an international scholar from Glasgow University, comments on his role in developing a postgraduate school in applied economics and management at the Perm campus. As part of the Discovering Russia column, Dr. Harold A. Moreno-Franco shares his journey in "flavours" from Mexico to Russia.

Yulia Grinkevich,
Director for Internationalisation

'We allow talents to develop in the region'

Galina E. Volodina has been the Campus Director in Perm since 1997. Under her leadership, the Perm campus has turned into the major player in shaping the region's future – be it general education, retaining of talents, or scientific R&D activities. .

What sets HSE Perm apart from other campuses today?

Besides the fact that we are the furthest from the centre of Russia, and this fact has impacted our formation and development here, we are the most compact campus, not only in terms of the placement of buildings (we have seven of them and they all are within walking distance from one another), but also because we have the smallest student

body (on average we accept 600 students a year, both to Bachelor's and Master's programmes, and this figure is very unlikely to increase). Such compactness creates a special culture and atmosphere on our campus - everyone knows each other, everyone says "hello". I meet students and ask how they are doing. We are so used to this familiar atmosphere that we no longer perceive it as something unusual. Nevertheless, people from outside the campus always notice that the relations everyone has with each other are very warm and friendly.

Moreover, we are a campus that supports the initiatives of specialists with expert knowledge of a particular area. Even if there is no team for them at the campus yet, we can see people's potential and eagerness to work with us. For example, five years ago, we met Aleksey Kychkin, who is a specialist in digital technologies with a lot of experience in applied projects. We began working together and formed a laboratory for his –specific field - the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Empirical Studies. Another example is Sofya Kulikova, who is an expert in neuroscience. There is

no team for her to work with on campus, but we are creating conditions for a future team's formation and development. She is currently inviting postdocs and cooperates closely with the Institute for Cognitive Neuroscience at HSE Moscow. There might not be many opportunities outside of HSE, but many opportunities can be found inside of it. We are truly open to all initiatives that have potential for development - and not just purely scientific ones. A couple of days ago, the head of the Perm Cinematheque and a well-known director of documentary films visited me. He came and told me: "Let's eliminate human poverty in cinematography. Let's create programmes to train specialists in all types of film arts". And his visit surprisingly coincided with the opening of the HSE Film Institute in Moscow. This is how, I think, creative industries will develop and I see the future behind it. Also, we appointed a working group to examine this opportunity further; maybe we will start with short programmes and further help them evolve into a Bachelor's or a Master's degree programmes.

Has the pandemic affected the campus' development agenda?

In general, a lot of things began to develop rapidly throughout the campus and HSE University on the whole. The processes of integrating the university into one whole structure - the "four campuses - one university" idea and subsequent intercampus courses - revived during the pandemic. This is what we particularly wanted here in the region for many years - not to be considered as simply of provincial branch of a large Moscow university, because we are not. Furthermore, since the integration processes have begun, everyone understands that we are, unconditionally, HSE!

As for the campus itself, we have definitely progressed in terms of the quality of educational offerings. We launched the very first online Bachelor's degree programme in Design in Russia (together with the HSE Art and Design School), and our professors are very active in recording e-courses in general. We have been thinking of initiating such this programme, although we never thought it would be online. It is quite remarkable for Perm overall, since it was once proclaimed as an aspiring cultural capital and has seen quite rapid development since then, including a lot of progress in design. We would like to create a face-to-face version of the programme as well, when we are ready in terms of human resources for this. For the time being, we are fine-tuning the online version of the Bachelor's programme, which had a very powerful start. Frankly, we did not expect that much success, due to high tuition fees - there are no such prices at other universities in Perm - as well as to the fact that this is an online Bachelor's degree; we would attract 96 people from various Russian cities and even from abroad. I am sure this programme will flourish and, together with our Moscow colleagues, we will make every effort for it to succeed further.

This is a great example of how HSE University can consolidate internally. We are now involved in setting up an international Bachelor's in Business and Economics, a new type of undergraduate programme that would offer joint courses at the campuses in Nizhny Novgorod, St. Petersburg and Perm. We would love to have more online Bachelor's programmes together with the other campuses in over the next three to five years. This will help attract a larger number of applicants who want to study at HSE and who will have a very strong idea about our university as a single institution. Perhaps this might be the way of the future.

What are your current priorities?

From the first days of HSE Perm's foundation, serious attention has been paid to the development of general education in the region, since we have always understood that it is unlikely that prospective students will be coming to our campus from other parts of Russia. We realized that we needed to help educate children at schools, so they are well prepared to apply to HSE University and eventually choose us. This means out close cooperation with schools. In 2004, we created a university district, which unites 48 schools in the Perm Region and neighboring Udmurtia. We founded a lyceum (No. 10), which is now one of the best educational institutions in the region.

What we really wanted though was to create our own lyceum under HSE Perm. Since the HSE Academic Council approved the initiative of our campus and of the governor of the Perm Territory, we are planning to admit the first 75 lyceum students this September. And this is quite an achievement! After 25 years, we are opening a secondary education school as part of HSE Perm and proud to say that our campus offers all levels of education (including continuing professional education, which has been developing quite well at our campus all these years).

We started holding a competition for teachers when we realized they needed an upgrade in teaching methods and skills. Today it is an international Olympiad for (Russian-speaking) teachers, which has already drawn 35,000 participants from all regions of Russia and several CIS countries. Our campus also organized a university-school cluster, which operates as a permanent training space for teachers so that they can improve their teaching skills. Moreover, within the framework of our "Open University" project we are training 700 free attendees and 350 participants, together with the Russian Ministry of Education. Our bigger mission is to work for the Perm region, and I believe that we can give our support and assistance on many issues. Our faculty members are experts for government departments and provide expert opinions for media services. Furthermore, we participate in absolutely all government councils and are known in all ministries. And since the campus cares about the children it educates, we are particularly concerned about retaining talent in the region. Less than a month ago, we held a strategic session

on the development of the Perm region for the local administration, involving about 200 people, where one of key issues discussed was talent management and creation of attractive opportunities for such gifted youth. There are two crucial events when young people are deciding on whether to leave or not – graduation from high school and graduation from university. Thanks to HSE Perm, a share of high school students' outflow is being reduced - we are an institution that allows young talents to develop in their home region, thereby making it much more competitive. We are doing our best to boost scientific research as well, and Elena Shadrina will talk more about it.

What would you wish for HSE Perm on its 25th anniversary?

Never stop moving forward as a team, because teamwork is crucial for our growth. When I first came to HSE in 1997, I had no one. I brought a girl from my previous job, and she worked her way up to become the vice dean for professional retraining. We carried out targeted recruitment and every single person was hired to a specific position. And when you hire the staff yourself, you know everything about them. Every staff member is valuable to us, and when necessary - we stand back-to-back with one another.

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Research

Elena Shadrina is Deputy Director of the HSE Campus in Perm. She talked about the research the campus does and international initiatives it participates in.

What kind of research does the campus do? What makes it unique?

First of all, the research we do would not have been possible without the enthusiasm of the people who come with ideas, possess expertise knowledge, and then develop it - they form teams of like-minded people around themselves and, at the same time, try to turn their ideas into applied projects in order to monetize it. Also, since our campus is small and there are only a few scientific units, we work side by side and eventually become involved in each other's projects. As such, there is no rigid division between applied research and fundamental research. However, although the research our colleagues do is multidisciplinary, there are key areas that are being developed by two laboratories.

The International Laboratory of Intangible-driven Economy is headed by Angel Barajas and employs a very strong team of researchers who are based both at the Perm and St.Petersburg campuses. The Laboratory traces its origins to a research group, which has been studying intellectual capital and empirical finance at HSE Perm for the last 10 years, and currently carries out comparative empirical research in order to develop awareness of intellectual resources as key drivers in the new economy. It aims to become an international research centre with a key focus on the role of intangibles in the creation of sustainable competitive advantages in different sectors, including sports and education. The research team includes both leading scholars and young fellows from

HSE and our partner universities in Europe and the US. Secondly, the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Empirical Studies covers two research areas, which are quite promising in the international and local arenas. The first area of research is digital transformations led by Aleksey Kychkin. Together with the Austrian Software Competence Center Hagenberg, our colleagues are working on a number of quite timely applied projects, such as a smart home system, underground mine ventilation, and environmental monitoring. Mine ventilation is a pressing issue for many industrial regions of Russia, including the Perm Region where salt and minerals are mined. Thus, such technologies can be used by industries. Environmental monitoring is also an auspicious field, especially in the light of the UN's sustainable development goals (SDG). And, for the record, our colleagues have received a grant through the Artificial Intelligence federal project to continue working on these systems. The second area of research is digital humanities, and we already have an established team of both eminent scholars and young researchers. The research they do is quite diverse - history, archives, museums, education, etc. One of the ongoing projects is "Migration as a factor in social transformation of the USSR regions during the post-war recovery period: using digital humanities methods for analysis" - a joint project between HSE Perm and Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, inspired by Dinara Gagarina and overseen by Dr. Sergei Kornienko. The aspirations of our colleagues are to bring the digital humanities to schools and universities and turn them into a new Master's programme in Digital Methods in Humanities that the campus launched in 2020 and is now supervised by Dinara Gagarina.

Are there international projects or initiatives that the campus is involved in?

We hold two international conferences. One is the International Conference on Applied Research in

Economics (iCare), which was initially founded by Dr. Dmitriy Potapov and Dr. Dmitri Vinogradov in 2013. Its keynote speakers are always leading scholars in their respective fields, and the international representation of conference participants is usually broad. Another conference that we have been holding for nine years, and which became international last year, is Neighbors in Science. It is an interdisciplinary scientific conference, in which the majority of campus employees participate. We have also recently started inviting young researchers and co-authors from other universities. Its main idea is multidisciplinary and, thus, when we compile a programme for the conference, the sections always feature people from different fields. This way, it becomes clear what kind of research the campus is doing and what methods can be used in other fields. Very often, the conference results in the formation of interdisciplinary research teams, which is one of its main goals.

HSE Perm is also eager to internationalize its existing teams so that we can enter the global arena and attract international interest. We have four international professors - Dr. Dmitri Vinogradov from the University of Glasgow, Jürgen Eichberger from Heidelberg University, Clemens Puppe from Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and Michael Lamla from Leuphana University Lüneburg - working on such topics as decision-making under uncertainty and behavioural economics, together with our own economists, psychologists and linguists who are currently studying how the news can affect people's behaviour and decision-making. One of the ongoing projects looks at how the speeches of President Putin influence the perception and attitude of citizens towards

what is happening in Russia, as well as towards their self-identification as the Russian nation. Another leading research fellow, Stephen Michael Croucher from Massey University, is working with our linguists on intercultural communication; professor digital expert, Professor Yousef Makhoul from Nottingham Business School, is teaching econometrics and holding a scientific seminar on research methods for graduate students and post-graduate students; a leading research fellow, Amedeo Napoli from the University of Lorraine, is working with Aleksey V. Buzmakov on machine-learning methods. The majority of these international professors have come to us through international recruitment initiatives, which are truly one of the most powerful resources helping us to attract colleagues from the global job market to develop and enrich the research, science, and teaching at HSE Perm.

Another unique international collaboration for us is the US-Russia University Virtual Partnership with Ohio University, which was won by colleagues from the Bachelor's programme "Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication" and includes mutual events for students.

Thus, this is how the research is being done at the HSE Perm campus - we support those people who can present their own research ideas and, together, we can think of the steps that must be taken in order to implement those ideas locally and/or globally. Ideas also arise out of our casual contacts with colleagues - since we work next to each other - and might turn into multidisciplinary projects across different scientific units or even campuses. You could call it a real research incubator!

'Methodologically and practically, we are very interdisciplinary, and this is our strength'

Dinara Gagarina is Head of Historical Research Group at the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Empirical Studies (Perm) and Academic Supervisor of the Digital Humanities Master's programme. Since 2021, she is also the national representative of Digital Humanities Course Registry.

What is the value of digital humanities in general and for HSE Perm in particular?

In general, DH reflect the processes taking place in science and society today - digital transformation of

everyone and everything. The field is very relevant because it is interdisciplinary, and these days many discoveries happen precisely at the intersection of disciplines. DH approaches and methods make it possible to work with the sources 'exhausted' by traditional methods thus allowing to obtain scientific knowledge that could not be gained by other methods. We are sure that competencies in digital methods are crucial for future successful careers of humanities graduates (historians and linguists if we talk about HSE Perm) and reflect it in our educational programmes.

What digital methods do you teach under the Master's programme? Is this the programme's only advantage?

The approach selected combines, on the one hand, an opportunity to cover a wide range of methods and, on the other hand, to focus on those in which one

wishes to specialize - text analysis, GIS technologies, network analysis, databases, media, and data analysis. Furthermore, there is also an opportunity to deepen knowledge in certain disciplines with the help of intercampus courses. In addition, of course, we teach learners how to code.

We also cannot provide quality education in this area without scientific research and access to industry, which is primarily the culture sector, such as museums, theaters, libraries, archives, but also the commercial and the non-profit social sector. Knowledge and technology transfer is very important for us. Moreover, since we connect to the real sector with the research we do, it is important that students participate in projects and see that what they are learning is already in demand in the cultural sphere and the commercial sector. We have projects that are being carried out at the Department of Humanities, the Group for Historical Research and the School of Foreign Languages, which specifically address problems of history, linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies. For example, last year, our students were involved in a project with a local NGO - they created 3D models of architectural objects that children devised on their own. Our students were the so-called digital companions of the project. The project of our student Nikita Matkin - Another City: Mystical Stories of Perm - received an honourable mention in the Best Russian-Language Scientific and Popular Science Works Competition for HSE University employees under the "History of Art" track. Right now, we are also planning a project on the history of clothing and involving the Lysvenskaya Hosiery and Glove Factory in it. There are educational projects as well. Since we have several teachers from schools among our students, they initiated a project on bringing digital humanities to schools. Together with young school professionals, who have a broader outlook on education, we are trying to develop digital products for schools and are already testing them in several schools. For example, our lecturer Iliana Ismakaeva is working on the educational aspects of virtual reality in cultural heritage preservation (this project is supported by the Potanin Foundation). Moreover, Ulyana Abdulina, a Master's student, is currently developing methods for teaching children as part of this project. This year, she opened a virtual reality studio in her school.

Can you tell more about the DH team and the projects/partnerships your department is involved in?

One of the central, institutionally supported projects is a post-war migration project led by professor Kornienko, which is being implemented together with the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University within

the framework of Mirror Laboratories Programme. We analyze migration as a key aspect in the formation of social and cultural patterns of Molotov (today's Perm) and Kaliningrad regions. Nevertheless, we plan to go beyond these regions. This topic is broad in terms of spatial analysis (for this, we are using GIS technologies) and from the point of view of visualization (e.g., we will visually display the routes of migrations, what items families were taking with them, and how those objects ended up in Kaliningrad or Perm, as well as what their homes looked like during the first years of their migration).

With the coming of a new postdoc Lilia Panteleeva, who is a sociologist, cultural specialist, anthropologist and linguist, we began developing interdisciplinary digital anthropology. We have high hopes for this field and thus formed an interdisciplinary team and launched a research seminar. Some of our colleagues work on corpus and computational linguistics; Elizaveta Smirnova, for example.

Our team is very small. Methodologically and practically, we are very interdisciplinary, and this is our strength. We have colleagues whose core expertise is history, cultural studies and linguistics, but the team also includes interdisciplinary specialists.

Speaking of cooperation, we value the units we work with throughout the HSE University family. These include the HSE Centre for Digital Humanities, the Poletayev Institute for Theoretical and Historical Studies in the Humanities, as well as the Nizhny Novgorod and St.Petersburg campuses. We are carrying out a joint project for three years with the Centre for Digital Cultures and Media Literacy. The project was supported by the Vladimir Potanin Foundation and carried out jointly with the local history museum to study the audience of museums and the possibility of implementing modern technologies in local museums. The Vladimir Potanin Foundation also sponsored the VR course in our master's programme. Outside of HSE University, we cooperate with all major cultural institutions and museums of the Perm region - colleagues bring us their cases, our students do something for them. The nearby Museum of Modern Art is very close to us in terms of values - they teach our students and they are members of the State Examination Board. We also cooperate with commercial organizations inside and outside of the Perm region, including IT companies who come to us with master classes and projects. We also have projects at the intersection of social, educational and marketing aspects of robotics. One of the latest studies, which we completed in December and now expect a large article to be published, is on the educational robotics segment. We are still very young but I believe in us and our further development.

From Academic Projects to Commercial Research

Aleksey Kychkin is the Head of the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Empirical Studies and an Associate Professor at the Department of Information Technologies in Business.

Before joining HSE Perm, you worked as Vice Dean for Science at Perm Polytech. Why did you decide to move?

In 2016, I was invited as a guest lecturer to teach a course on Software Systems Architecture Design to students in the Software Engineering Bachelor's programme and a course on Architecture of Management Information Systems to students of the Information Analytics in Enterprise Management Master's programme. The campus environment surprised me a lot - the colleagues I worked with had a high level of expertise, while the students I used to teach were highly educated. Their priorities in life and their way of thinking about digital technologies were in sync with my own. So, two years later I was granted a permanent position as Associate Professor at the Department of Information Technologies in Business. By that time, I developed lecture materials, and my seminars were set. The courses I had taught perfectly fitted into students' educational programmes. It was clear that the students were interested in my classes, and there was positive feedback from them. In 2020, I was also offered to head the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Empirical Research, which we are trying to make more research oriented. My students and I, thus, switched from academic projects to research works, including a commercial project. Project-based learning, which is widely being developed on our campus and which I have been implementing for the last two to three years, has brought several interesting projects to us.

Can you talk more about projects and student involvement in research activities?

Not a lot of students show interest in research work. However, the most talented in mathematics, programming, foreign languages and the most proactive - those wishing to advance in studies of digital technologies and personal development and produce new results - are invited to work in projects at the Laboratory. It is certainly not an easy task to find these talents. Together with colleagues from other departments - Olga Vikentyeva, Alexander Deryabin, and Lidia Shestakova - we hold seminars and conferences to meet them and motivate them to participate in our projects.

Since our students won the UMNİK and START nationwide contests held by the Foundation for Assistance to Small Innovative Enterprises, we were contacted by IT firms to carry out commercial projects and developed software solutions for them. One of the projects was for the Moscow IT firm TASS Information Technologies, which develops and supports the - TASS Business" information system. It processes a large volume of data on many companies, and we were asked to develop a model for assessing their investment attractiveness. Another project was for the Perm developer of smart home systems, for whom we developed a system for calculating various indicators of electricity cost, particularly for large buildings.

In regards to other projects, we designed software architecture, and already, we have accumulated a lot of experience in this area. We are eager to dive into the details as much as possible, and that is what our customers really liked as detailed project documentation can be used in the future by any software developer. Last year, for example, we developed a SCADA system for an industrial firm in Siberia. The scope of work was very wide - we had to get immersed in data analysis technologies, software architectures, programming, and technological processes. Moreover, since we are a research-oriented laboratory and already have analytical experience, we have a good grasp of the subject area, understand it, design qualitative software architecture and, if necessary, develop the necessary software.

Furthermore, projects let students grow professionally. Some of them, unfortunately for us, leave to find work in companies. Nevertheless, the feedback we get from employers shows that our work has not been in vain.

The students who work at the Laboratory, are they mainly graduate students?

We employ both undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduate students work mainly as software engineers, as they are good at programming and understand how system software works. Graduate students mainly come from Business Informatics, and they work in customer support and product requirements, as well as design and model processes and systems. Just like in real life - software engineers can never work alone; they always need business analysts. Therefore, we try to balance out our team - graduate students hold management positions and help the software engineers through assigning and tracking tasks.

However, we do not restrict ourselves to degrees. Primarily, we need students who are knowledgeable in mathematics and software design; we also need engineers who can work on-site for some time. We also need specialists in such fields as energy and smart cities as we become more actively engaged in digital environmental monitoring technologies. We value experts in particular areas no matter if they are Bachelor's, Master's or PhD students.

Does the Laboratory have international partners and/or initiatives?

Having access to articles, projects and a formed team definitely help me to get acquainted with prominent external organizations. This is how I had my first meeting with research fellows of the Software Competence Center Hagenberg (SCCH), a world-class research institute. The meeting took place in Hannover at the international exhibition Hannover Messe in 2019. I shared how our work is organized and how we conduct scientific research. The colleagues became very much interested in the work we do and invited me for an internship, which became possible with the support of the Young Faculty Support Programme. Our main focus of work is demand response and energy management systems, which is a promising area both for Europe and Russia.

It was a very rewarding experience. The knowledge I gained during the internship was implemented in real projects. We together with key researcher in SCCH, PhD Georgios Chasparis also published a scientific article "Feature and model selection for day-ahead electricity-load forecasting in residential buildings" in a high rating journal Energy and Buildings.

Another international project is being run with Prof. Stefan Voeth from Technische Hochschule Georg Agricola, Bochum (Germany). We are conducting analysis of ventilation digital twins based on OpenModelica implementation.

As for 2022 and future, we have a lot more ideas and plans and I truly hope that everything will work out.

A Specialist Input from an International Scholar

Dmitri Vinogradov is Professor of Finance at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow. At HSE Perm he holds positions of Professor at the School of Economics and Finance and Academic Supervisor of the Postgraduate School of Applied Economics and Management.

How have you decided to start working at HSE Perm?

I graduated from HSE University in 1995 while working at the department of international relations and then became a lecturer of Money and Finance. At that time (in the 1990s), the Perm campus was being formed as part of a larger international project led by HSE with the aim of introducing new economics teaching to the curricula of Russian universities - both classical and technical. As part of the project team, I travelled to the cities where HSE campuses were subsequently opened. From these trips, I had many new contacts - more in Perm than elsewhere. Before the campus was officially established, I was giving lectures at a training programme for school teachers. Then, there was a break in my formal association with HSE - I moved to Germany to do my PhD and got a job in the UK after that. Even though I lived and worked abroad, my informal relationship with HSE University never stopped, and particularly with HSE Perm, whose director Galina Volodina was very much concerned about pushing forward research activities on campus. At the same time, the iCARE conference kicked off and Dmitry Potapov invited me to join the organizing committee. Thus, I was informally involved in a few initiatives. At the beginning of 2018, I was officially hired by HSE University through the international

recruitment initiative to develop a postgraduate school in economics at HSE Perm (in addition to organizing the iCARE Conference and engaging in research). I developed its concept, bearing in mind potential demand from students and the strengths of HSE Perm's academic staff. The campus has always been very strong in economics and management, and it was important to combine both of them in a single school.

What are some projects/initiatives that you are involved at HSE Perm?

As the creation of a postgraduate school in applied economics and management at HSE Perm was my main assignment, I eventually became its academic supervisor. Today, I am involved in the enrollment process, developing a basic working curriculum and supervising the licensing of the programme. I am very glad that the school is now open - we already had two admission campaigns and are preparing for the third one.

Since 2013, I have been co-organizing the iCARE conference (which was initially started by Dmitry Potapov and Grigory Kosenok). With the exception of 2016, when it was held in Essex (UK), the conference has been held in Perm, although we have plans to hold it in different locations abroad from time to time to raise awareness of HSE Perm. The conference was initially planned to focus on applied industrial organization, but we broadened its theme in regards to applied research in economics, finance and management. There is a gap, of course, between traditionally established management and economics. These two fields have different research methodologies, but we still try to find an overlap and usually devote a couple of sections to management to see how certain questions in economics are approached differently by management scholars. The last two conferences

took place online with encouraging feedback from the international keynote speakers, who are very eager to visit Perm. Still, we hope that the conference will return to its traditional face-to-face format soon. Personally, it is quite an achievement that our international colleagues are willing to work with HSE Perm, which means we are doing something interesting and appealing to them.

Thus, to some extent, the conference can be used to screen potential colleagues. We invite our international colleagues as keynote speakers or members of the programme committee and, through that, we can get to know them better. Later,

we might invite them to work at the campus - give lectures or do research together. Jürgen Eichberger from Heidelberg University, for example, was our keynote speaker, and he also helped us establish contacts with Clemens Puppe from Karlsruhe Institute of Technology to enhance the postgraduate school. Both of them have been published in leading economics journals, and seeing outstanding scholars like them lecturing to HSE Perm students is a true inspiration. Working with them and learning from them - this is the motivation behind bringing in great scholars to HSE Perm, even if it is just online for now.

From Mexico to Russia (A Journey in Flavours)

The HSE Look is restarting its column about life in Russia, what can be discovered in its various cities, and the interesting venues at HSE University and beyond. If you have an interesting experience to share, please contact us at: look@hse.ru. In this issue, we present a column by **Dr. Harold Moreno-Franco**.

Before living here in Moscow, I was in Mexico for almost eight years, doing my postgraduate studies. So, I had the opportunity to try out Mexican cuisine and compare it to the dishes from my country, Colombia. Now, I'm not a foodie, but I know what the difference between "nachos" and "totopos" is. The latter is a fried tortilla snack which is accompanied by different types of spicy salsas.

Mexican cuisine offers a wide array of flavours. For example, we have "ceviche", (raw fish and shrimps in a hot lemon dressing), from the north of the country to "mole" from the south. There are at least 30 varieties of 'moles', which are made with cocoa and different types of chilies. We can find it in the supermarket as a paste that can be used to prepare a salsa which is served with chicken and rice. It's simply delicious! I have to admit that my favourite Mexican food is 'Cochinita Pibil' - a pork dish, with a red onion vinaigrette and Habanero chili from the Yucatán near the Caribbean coast, obviously served with tortillas. Before coming to Russia I didn't know anything about the food, but I had heard about the beautiful women, communism, Putin and the vodka.

At the start of my stay, I suffered because I missed Mexican food, especially the hot salsas and the large helpings of food. I remember that, during my first week, I was at the canteen with a colleague and I asked for a larger portion. He turned around and said: "Are you really going to eat all of this?" I felt embarrassed and replied: "No, it's enough".

Russians generally keep an eye on their health; they also tend to use less salt and eat less fried food. In fact, I lost eight kilos in the two/three-month period when I first arrived in Russia. Here in Moscow, the portions in restaurants are quite small. However, in contrast, when visiting a Russian person's home, one will be treated to a large spread of which one is expected to eat every bit. Russians are very hospitable and tend to wolf down their food during a lunch break whereas in Latin America it might take two or more hours to complete a meal. In fact, in Barranquilla in Colombia, people even take a siesta after lunch. For me, that seemed as weird as it probably seems to you, but eventually I got used to it. I still have not been able to achieve the velocity that Russians have when it comes to eating. In addition, I miss my naps!

In Mexico, they not only have hundreds of different ways of eating tacos, they eat other strange things too. For instance, in Mexico City they have amazing street food and people can eat all parts of an animal, even eyeballs and other parts I cannot mention in this article. In both Mexico and Moscow, one can buy meat cooked on a vertical rotisserie; similar to Russian-style "shawarma", there is "al pastor", which is what it is called in Mexico. The main difference is that in Mexico it is made with pineapple. Speaking about strange food, I must confess that I find eating fish as a snack bizarre, but Russians really seem to enjoy cold fish salad and jellied pork. To be fair, in my country, we often have a breakfast consisting of a soup with meat and eggs!

I took a Russian cooking course four years ago and the plus of this course was that you could drink wine during the class. The organizer of the event insisted that I attend, but my body couldn't take the strain. As you can imagine, I forgot everything that I had learnt. My wife is still asking me when I am going to cook the Russian soup recipe that I learnt from the course. Needless to say, I don't remember the recipe that well. Luckily, my mother-in-law is a great cook and my wife's grandmother is great at making pies and cookies.

Of all the tasty, weird and interesting things I have eaten, Russian sweet bread is still my favourite!