HGGS

HEIDELBERGER GRADUIERTENSCHULE FÜR GEISTES- UND SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386



The Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences hosts an international community of diverse, talented doctoral scholars, who take different and sometimes surprising career paths after graduation. In this edition of the HGGS Newsletter, we are proud to present a group of former HGGS members, who have left a mark on our graduate school through their active role in shaping doctoral research in Heidelberg. At the same time, as they tell us in their contributions, the HGGS has been an important add-on to their time as doctoral candidates at Heidelberg University.

Enjoy reading this issue and do spread the world about joining the academic community of the HGGS!

Prof. Dr. Andrea Albrecht, Neuphilologische Fakultät

Prof. Dr. Matthias Becker, Theologische Fakultät

Prof. Dr. Harald Fuess, Philosophische Fakultät

Prof. Dr. Markus Pohlmann, Fakultät für Wirtschaftsund Sozialwissenschaften

Prof. Dr. Ekkehart Reimer, Juristische Fakultät

Prof. Dr. Anne Sliwka, Fakultät für Verhaltens- und

Empirische Kulturwissenschaften

Dr. Astrid Wind, Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften

Newsletter Summer Semester 2024

ALUMNI EDITION

Alix Schulz (Law)

Chieh Hsu (Sociology)

Amarachi Adannaya Igboegwu (Education)

Anne Dutt (Psychology)

Tobias Müller (Gerontology)

Tyce Shideler (Anthropology)

Andrew Wambua (Education)

EDITOR: DEEPA E. JOHN

Dr. Alix Schulz

I submitted my PhD thesis titled: "Gender Self-Determination in Private International and Procedural Law" at the Faculty of Law, Institute for comparative law, conflict of laws and international business law. In my PhD thesis, I explored how a person's legal gender should be determined in cross-border situations. Amongst other questions, I examined the possibilities and limits of legal gender recognition in private international law and which human rights requirements must be met. The thesis will be published by Mohr Siebeck in the beginning of 2024.

I joined the HGGS in 2020 and participated in multiple online events during my membership. For example, I had the opportunity to present my research to the HGGS community in 2021 by giving a talk on "Gender in Private International and Procedural Law – Interdisciplinary Foundations". This interdisciplinary exchange was very fruitful, as questions relating to gender cannot be answered conclusively by legal scholars. Rather, legal scholars particularly depend on other disciplines in this field of research.

Currently, I am a trainee lawyer at the Higher Regional Court of Munich and will take my second state exam in autumn 2024. However, if the opportunity arises, I could very well imagine returning to academia after my legal traineeship.

My research stays in Cambridge and Hamburg were a particularly valuable experience, as I had time to work on my thesis in peace and quiet. Apart from that, I have found that taking a little more time for my PhD and attending lots of conferences and summer schools and simply having time for free weekends has worked well for me.



»Gender Self-Determination in Private International and Procedural Law.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marc-Philippe Weller

Institute for Comparative Law, Conflict of Laws and international Business Law

Faculty of Law

Prof. Dr. Chieh Hsu

If there is one word that characterizes my HGGS experience, which I fondly remember, and has become uncannily relevant to what I currently and aspire to do, it would be Interdisziplinartät. That is the spirit of the Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften. While the details of that foundational seminar on *Interdisziplinarität* escape me now, my four years with the HGGS were enriched by the variety and breadth of research disciplines, topics, methods, and theoretical paradigms I was exposed to. Moreover, the HGGS community provided for me a "safe space" to test out research ideas and theoretical formulations that were work-in-progress. But what I came to recognize as the most valuable asset is the ability to navigate different fields and find the right approach to draw connections conceptually. Cultivated by the HGGS, this ability has not only bolstered my doctoral studies but also facilitated my academic career.

My appointment as an Assistant Professor in Intercultural Competence at the University of St.Gallen (HSG) began in August 2022, after three years of a researcher and adjunct faculty role at my alma mater, National Taiwan University. This position, however, is based at the first satellite hub of the University, the St.Gallen Institute of Management in Asia (SGI), in Singapore. While similar to other early career professorships in scope where our undertakings encompass research, teaching, and service, this job is embedded in uniquely intercultural and interdisciplinary settings, for which the HGGS prepared me.

When I teach in Singapore, I am usually facing a class with half of the students on exchange from St.Gallen. The other half would be local or international students in Singapore. The classroom is hence always a representation of different academic systems, incentives, and motivations, not to mention cultures and backgrounds. It is not enough to simply factor in divergent views, account for discrepancies, and level the playing field in the classroom to ensure even knowledge transfer.



»The Path to an Occupation: Early Postarrival Experiences among Chinese-speaking Highly Skilled Female Family Migrants in Germany.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kathia Serrano Velarde

Max-Weber-Institute of Sociology

Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences

My mission as an instructor, to merit my job title, is to guide students with a clear roadmap of how to detect, understand, interpret, and appreciate possible cultural boundaries and encourage them to apply those learnings with empathy.

My immediate workplace, or the environment of the SGI, epitomizes an interdisciplinary space which I consider to be a fertile ground for academic research. Given the nature of the SGI as an overseas institute serving and representing the HSG community, the expertise and disciplines of its faculty members are deliberately diversified. Within the small universe where finance, management, and sociology coincide, I soon found that whereas we are intrigued by many of the same phenomena (e.g., the migration of talents, group/organizational dynamics or "management") and similar inquiries, the languages (scholarly or otherwise) we employ, the theoretical frameworks we draw on, and our fundamental epistemologies vary. If anything, the HGGS days have primed me for these interdisciplinary exchanges. The inspirations I gained from my colleagues' fields have come to nurture my own thinking and work in a much more expansive way.

The service I help render at the SGI, aside from programand course-related administration, is one that also connects HSG and Switzerland with higher educational institutions, St.Gallen's existing vibrant alumni network, and the larger international, particularly European business communities in Singapore. In essence, in order to bridge the gap between Europe and Asia in those capacities, it requires more than an informed understanding of the industries, sectors, and stakeholders with whom we engage. What is crucial to the task is an adroitness to locate intersections, common interests, and even shared values across "cultures" while giving due respect to differences. In a nutshell, what we try to accomplish, functioning as an intellectual bridge and incubator that empowers minds and initiatives across two continents, is also what we preach in the education we afford to our students.

"...the HGGS days have primed me for these interdisciplinary exchanges. The inspirations I gained from my colleagues' fields have come to nurture my own thinking and work in a much more expansive way."

I have benefited immensely from the *Interdisziplinarität*oriented thinking that HGGS has conferred upon me. It is a
mindset that propels me to venture outside my fields of
specialization and look for beauty and convergence in the
work of others. In a world replete with information, where
Large Language Models have accelerated its generation, it
makes sense to strive to produce knowledge enhanced by
cross-sectional and -disciplinary considerations that are a
few steps beyond what chatbots are capable of. That is what
I as an academic shall continue to do.

"I have benefited immensely from the Interdisziplinarität-oriented thinking that HGGS has conferred upon me. It is a mindset that propels me to venture outside my fields of specialization and look for beauty and convergence in the work of others."

Dr. Amarachi Adannaya Igboegwu

My time in the Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistesund Sozialwissenschaften (HGGS) 2016 cohort was fantastic, creating connections with fellow doctoral candidates that proved invaluable. The colloquium, in particular, was a hub of knowledge exchange, where I gained insights from diverse perspectives, shaping my academic journey.

The courses at HGGS were a standout, offering skill-building modules on scientific writing, critical thinking, project management and more. These not only broadened my horizons but also equipped me with practical tools that proved indispensable in my career growth.

Currently, I serve as the Learning and Development Specialist Adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council. My role focuses on cultivating leadership skills among our managers. Using an inclusive approach, I strive to foster a workplace culture that embraces diversity. The principles I learned at HGGS resonate in my daily work, contributing to the goal of creating an inclusive environment where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

At the heart of my academic journey is my doctoral research, titled "A Step in the Right Direction: Identifying Strategies for Preparing Initial Teacher Candidates for Culturally Diverse Classrooms in Baden-Württemberg." This research has proven instrumental in my humanitarian efforts.

Group Photo of a Leadership Workshop I facilitated in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

»A Step in the Right
Direction: Identifying
Strategies for Preparing
Initial Teacher Candidates
for Culturally Diverse
Classrooms in BadenWürttemberg.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anne Sliwka

Institute of Education Studies

Faculty of Behavioural and Cultural Studies

The connection between my research and humanitarian work is profound. The strategies identified have been directly applied to address challenges in culturally diverse settings. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, I've contributed meaningfully to the development and implementation of effective leadership for NRC staff worldwide.

In essence, my transition from HGGS to my current role has been seamless. The knowledge and skills from my doctoral studies are the bedrock of my professional success. The collaborative spirit of the cohort, enriching courses, and research endeavors have shaped me into a Learning and Development Specialist striving for excellence in fostering inclusive leadership and addressing nuanced challenges in humanitarian contexts. As I navigate the dynamic landscape of leadership and humanitarian work, I remain grateful for the foundation laid during my time at HGGS—a pivotal chapter setting me on a trajectory of impact and positive change.

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Dr. Anne Dutt

I was a member of the HGGS from 2015 to 2018 – a time I look back on with many good memories. It was mainly the exchange with other doctoral students which was inspiring with regard to my dissertation. By presenting my research results to an audience from outside my field, I had the opportunity to look at my work from a new perspective and gain new thought-provoking impulses.

In addition, attending interdisciplinary events as part of the curriculum proved equally fruitful. Within the framework of the HGGS, I attended a lecture on the basics of law as well as workshops on communication techniques and university didactics.

After completing my dissertation, I trained as a psychological psychotherapist at the Center for Psychological Psychotherapy in Heidelberg. I then worked as a psychotherapist in a psychosomatic-psychiatric clinic in Mannheim. After a short time, however, I was drawn back to Heidelberg University, where I have been working in the Central Student Advisory Service since 2022. Here I advise prospective and current students and support them in choosing and organizing their studies. I also organize major events in the field of student marketing.

In my day-to-day work, I benefit greatly from the structured, analytical way of working that I practiced while working on my dissertation. Through the many lectures and presentations I gave during my doctorate, I acquired rhetorical and didactic skills that I can apply in discussions and workshops with students. For all the importance of theoretical knowledge, always look for a link to practice: teach students, present your ideas to an audience from outside your field, write articles for laypeople. The experience that your own research topics affect, interest and inspire other people in their everyday lives is a strong and important motivation. Last but not least: make sure you approach your research and your writing with fun and curiosity.



»Subjective Aging
Experiences and
Negative Affectivity:
Examination of
Fundamental
Associations and of
Underlying Pathways.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hans-Werner Wahl

Institute of Psychology

Faculty of Behavioural and Cultural Studies

Prof. Dr. Tobias Müller

When I came to Heidelberg it was for the sole purpose of writing my PhD. I didn't yet know what exactly to write about and how this all might work, but I was really keen on finding out. And for me, the best place to start was Heidelberg because here we find the longest tradition of Gerontology as a scientific discipline in Germany (which is in fact really not that long, but anyways). I became officially a PhD student but wasn't lucky enough to also get a job at my faculty. So I was an extern, which meant that I couldn't participate in all this cool in-group activities within the staff and the "intern" PhD students, and that I wouldn't profit from informal talks during lunchtime etc. And after a while I felt that I really need to connect to other PhD students, not necessarily to discuss Gerontology but to share experiences, happy moments and frustration with the PhD writing process.

I was lucky that a friend pointed me to HGGS. I applied and that changed a lot for me. I quickly met a bunch of people that struggled in the same ways I did... but were also highly motivated and liked to have fun! Being part of a PhD-student-group somehow fueled my writing process. We discussed a lot about our ideas, methods and first outcomes, and very often during an evening these meetings would evolve into wine-drinking fun time and dancing... which sometimes again sparked some great ideas.

But also the HGGS itself had a direct impact on my thoughts and work. Sharing ideas with various other disciplines helped broaden my view. And there was always the opportunity to pitch ideas for workshops and guest speakers, which led to great new insights and networks.

So, to sum it up, HGGS played a vital role in my PhD process. Would I have accomplished my PhD without HGGS? Probably so, but I'm convinced that it wouldn't have been even half as much fun and definitely not that enriching from an academic point of view. Because one thing, that is becoming very clear to my with a few years distance, is that learning about other disciplines and being curious about all that stuff that is not you PhD-project is something that will help you for your future career!



»Terminations of relationships between people with dementia and their social contacts – analyzing the causes regarding significant others that don't provide care.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Andreas Kruse

Institute of Gerontology

Faculty of Behavioural and Cultural Studies

After submitting my PhD I figured that I didn't bring to the table what it takes to pursue a career in academics (e.g. not enough articles written, no official project conducted), so I left academia. And then I was a little disappointed that the world wasn't waiting for a well trained young professional with an expertise in Gerontology.

On the other hand I also found out that a PhD can open doors, and with a little work experience the chances are not too bad to be on a fast lane for next career steps.

Today I'm a professor for Social Gerontology at a small university of applied sciences in Cologne, a couple of years have passed and I'm still close friends with some of the people I first met in HGGS.

"the HGGS itself had a direct impact on my thoughts and work. Sharing ideas with various other disciplines helped broaden my view."

Dr. Tyce Shideler

Given the one year that has passed since I successfully defended my doctoral thesis at Heidelberg University's Institute of Anthropology, I've had ample time to reflect on the numerous academic, social, and personal benefits that I gained from my studies. While a doctoral student inevitably gains value from the interactions and academic projects at one's own faculty, it is equally in the additional academic commitments and associations made that make for a truly enriching experience. For me, it was my membership at HGGS that provided that perfect opportunity for additional learning, growth, and stimulating social opportunities that undoubtedly enhanced my doctoral experience. From the interdisciplinary nature of the HGGS itself -complete with a calendar full of workshops, seminars, and conferences reflecting themes from the entirety of the social sciences and humanities- one can't help but to be pushed beyond intellectual comfort zones and the insular vocabularies of distinct fields of study through HGGS membership. In other words, where else but at an HGGS seminar might a budding anthropologist like myself participate in conversations on such things as the minutiae of socio-environmental determinants on sports performance, or perhaps the impact of Qing Dynasty feminist thought on the late-medieval English literature? And best of all, the gueries of an anthropologist ill-informed on matters such as these were always to be enthusiastically received at HGGS.



Onboard a lobster fishing boat during field work in Nova Scotia

»Nova Homarus:
Indigenous Rights,
Economic Assimilation,
and the Return of
Ecological Plurality to the
Lobster Fishery of Nova
Scotia.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Guido Sprenger

Institute of Anthropology

Faculty of Behavioral and Cultural Studies

The personal benefits of having been an HGGS member have continued as I've transitioned from my studies and back to the world of work. In recent months I've returned to a career in international development, which was a field that I had worked in for nearly a decade prior to joining Heidelberg University in 2018. For those with even a general understanding of the field of international development, it is only too obvious that in order to succeed, an interdisciplinary perspective on how societies change, evolve, and progress over time is a must. While my newly gained anthropological insights, analytical perspectives, and research techniques are certain to benefit me in my current work in South Asia, the broader interdisciplinary perspective that I honed through my membership at HGGS has added innumerably to the practical application of those skills. How else might one hope to further inclusive economic development in a country without fully considering its particular history, religious and social norms, legal structures, and of course culture? Or consider the work of improving a country's education or health sector without taking into account the political-economic factors that ensure or hinder sustainability, or the diverse philosophical perspectives on service delivery and linguistic complexities that inevitably arise when working on the public provision of goods in the immensely diverse communities of this region. While bringing sound anthropological skills to further my career was the primary reason for joining Heidelberg University, I am certain that the added interdisciplinary insights that I gained from my colleagues at HGGS will only further my career and development objectives. I wish all current and future HGGS members the best of luck and the certainty that whatever your field of study, your participation in the HGGS program will greatly enhance your experience in Heidelberg!

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Dr. Andrew Wambua

Pursuing doctoral studies at the Heidelberg University and later becoming a HGGS member broadened my thinking and opened new opportunities for research and collaboration. As an interdisciplinary researcher, I have had a diverse range of experiences that have greatly enriched my academic and university life as follows:

Diverse perspectives: I have been exposed to a wide range of perspectives and approaches from different disciplines. This has broadened my understanding of complex issues affecting humanity such as food insecurity, energy insecurity and climate change.

Innovative solutions: HGGS helped me think outside the box and start planning for my career beyond my doctoral studies. I have been a finalist and semifinalist of Milken-Motsepe Innovation Prize in AgriTech 2022 and Milken-Motsepe Innovation Prize in Green Energy 2023 respectively.

Personal growth: HGGS challenged me to think critically, communicate effectively across disciplines, and adapt to new ways of approaching problems. Making the transition from a PhD program to a job can be a significant step, and the process can vary from one individual to another. The following steps worked out big time for me:

Networking skills: they say networking is the latest currency. During and after my doctoral program, I have networked with professionals in my field, attended interdisciplinary conferences, and participated in relevant workshops to strengthen my skills, competences, and connections.

Researching career paths: I have explored different career paths that align with my skills, interests, and values. I have learnt – and I am still learning – the art of being proactive, adaptable and being open to new opportunities as they emerge.



»Leading for Improvement and Collaborative Professionalism in Schools in Kenya.«

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anne Sliwka

Institute of Education Studies

Faculty of Behavioural and Cultural Studies

Visibility: I have written articles in print media, ICSEI Dialogic, and appeared in radio and television stations in Kenya. This has amplified my interdisciplinary work, particularly in education, agriculture, and climate change.

Currently, I serve as:

Co-Founder and Director of Africa Voices Dialogue https://www.africavoicesdialogue.africa/
Advisory Board Member of Journal of Professional Capital and Community (JPCC)
https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jpcc

Immediate former Board Member of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) https://www.icsei.net/

My advice to the early career researchers:

Be open to feedback. This can help you improve your research and academic writing skills.

Build a strong network with peers, mentors, and experts in your field.

Stay persistent and resilient in pursuing your research goals.

Maintain a healthy work-life balance to prevent burnout.

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"... HGGS challenged me to think critically, communicate effectively across disciplines, and adapt to new ways of approaching problems."

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JOIN THE HGGS DOCTORAL RESEARCH COMMUNITY!



Doctoral candidates in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Law are invited to apply for Graduate Membership.

The HGGS offers doctoral members a dynamic, collaborative research environment within an excellent national and international network that crosses disciplinary boundaries and fosters new research projects in a range of strategic areas.

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