



Newsletter Summer Semester 2026

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Dear Members,

The Summer Forum “ImA(I)gining the Future: How Digital Technologies Rewrite Our World” was a memorable and an inspiring event, bringing together HGGS scholars, experts and PhDs from across the world. A big *thank you* to the organizers, who made it such an enjoyable and enriching conference!

In this newsletter, you will find an update on other exciting research activities of our members. To learn more about current PhD projects in the HGGS and to meet each other in person, please join us for our next academic events, courses and social get-togethers during the autumn and winter.

We wish you a good start this semester and look forward to seeing you soon!

Dr. Astrid Wind

HGGS Summer Forum 2026

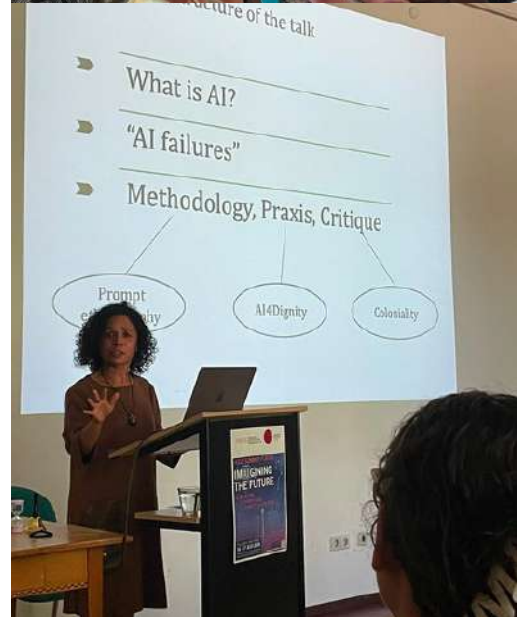
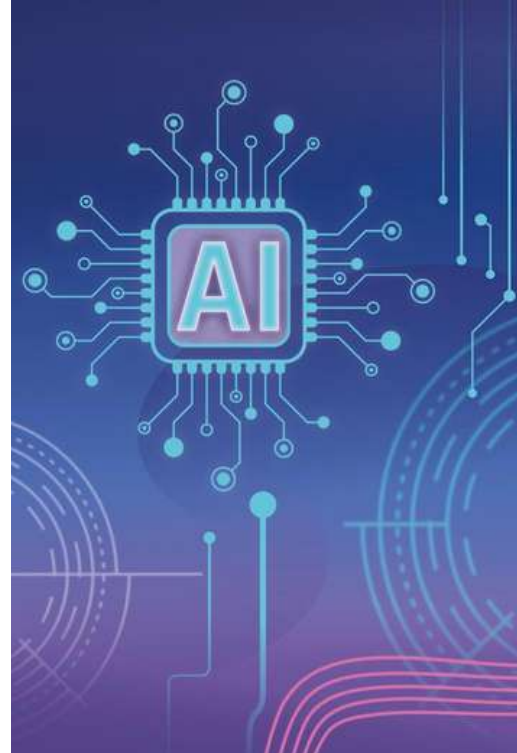
ImA(I)gining the Future: How Digital Technologies Rewrite Our World

The 2026 HGGS Summer Forum took place on the 16th and 17th of July. This year's Orga Team decided to focus on an in-person event to enhance the interaction of HGGS members and visiting scholars from around the world. Now, six years post-pandemic it felt like the right decision to step back from a hybrid format and embrace the immediate and connective qualities of an in-person meeting.

The forum welcomed speakers from all-over and outside of Europe. Our speakers came from different academic fields and methodologies: medicine, psychology, law, economics, translation studies, education, gender studies and religion. The presentations were varied and opened up a conversation on new technologies in general and AI in particular. The talks were evenly split between new possibilities and new dangers of this technology. The different perspectives also allowed us to rethink our stances on AI and to deepen our understanding of interlocking power structures that are being diminished or upheld in turn. Rather than asking whether technologies like AI should be used, we wanted to use the forum to investigate how they transform the present and future of scholarly voices, labor, creativity, and human understanding across languages, disciplines, and epistemic traditions. We began our conference by an interactive kahoot session to warm up and quiz the participants on their knowledge on AI and recent developments. As PhD students in the 2020s we are all vaguely familiar with AI and its applications but less so with the legal framework and the global implications.

The opening keynote speech by Prof Dr Sahana Udupa spoke about AI and the Dangers of the Discourse Machine, unpacking the impacts of generative AI on the sovereignty of speech and how prompt ethnography can be one way to track them. The following fish-bowl exercise allowed attendees to connect with each other and engage in a deeper conversation with the keynote speakers. Prompted by guiding questions provided by the Orga Team, the group discussed questions such as the role of AI in art, the inherent unfairness of a biased system being used globally, the increasing demand on earth's finite resources by data centers and the demands on the finite capacity of human brains.

Another highlight was the workshop led by Dr Eunice Chiu, a HGGS graduate, who encouraged us to question the pressures in academia to "publish or perish" and the subsequent push to use AI to keep up with the high demands on authors. She also examined the funding cycles and reminded us that we can build our own networks to support each other instead of caving under the pressure. It is up to us to shape the future of academia and build a community that represents us and our commitment to high quality and original research.



We ended the evening with a friendly dinner at the Restaurant Tati and their beer garden, where we exchanged our impressions of the first conference day and connected over our different research topics. The contacts across disciplinary and national boundaries are what makes the HGGs and its events special, it is moments and conversations like this that inform our work as scholars and remind us to stay open to new experiences and to challenge our assumptions.

On Friday, Dr Thomas Renkert and Florian Nieser, from the Heidelberg School of Education (HSE) and the Heidelberg Centre for Digital Humanities (HCDH) respectively, held a workshop on “Ways of Implementing AI in Group Tasks” where participants were put together in small groups and had to create a chat bot with the help of an AI assistant in an online forum. The groups had different instructions and were asked to reflect on the assumptions they had based on the “gender” of the chat bot – one was given a stereotypically female name, the other a stereotypically male name, and another a gender-neutral name. There was also a control group who implemented the same task without an AI assistant. The hands-on experience proved to be an enriching task in the schedule and led us to think about the practical real-life applications of artificial intelligence. It also prompted us to think about how we interact with strangers and whether our communication style and our attitude changes when talking to an AI assistant.

Dr Tobias Rees shared his own AI startup limn.ai and spoke about the need for a new conceptualisation for AI as straddling the human/machine binary. Humanity is bad at predicting paradigm shifts and imagining a future beyond a mere variation on the past. The presentation had a thoughtful and hopeful tune. The fishbowl with Tobias Rees focused on philosophical questions surrounding AI and its ethical use, we also talked about human nature and helpful approaches to mitigate the use of AI in our personal lives.

We especially enjoyed the interactive character of the Forum. In a world where immediacy has come to signal that we are in conversation with bots and spontaneous human interaction is becoming increasingly rare, the communicative aspect of this forum was a welcome breath of fresh air. Across the two days, conversation flowed naturally and it was a real pleasure to see so many students and researchers of varying fields enter in discussions with each other and thought experiments.



The need for interdisciplinary exchange is obvious and pressing. AI is encroaching (and encouraged to encroach) into every field of research and methodology. With unemployment on the rise, a difficult job market inside and outside of academia it comes as no surprise that PhD students are grappling with their future prospects. AI is not only a question of job security, but also poses an existential question for thought workers: if intellectual labour is valued less and less and the art of writing is being devalued from a skill set to a stochastic number's game, we need to renegotiate our place in the world.

The humanities are used to defending their domain in times of unrest and economic uncertainty and are thus accustomed to constantly justifying their existence. For other faculties, like the social sciences and increasingly also engineering and computer sciences, this is a new fight. All faculties and departments must work together to ensure the survival of the university as a free and creative environment where research is powered by the epistemological search to broaden the horizons of our understanding and not by the search for new investment opportunities.

A special thanks goes to Mahmoud's for the catering and the generous refills with refreshments and coffee that we desperately needed on these hot summer days. We also thank the HiWis whose tireless work behind the scenes made these two days run smoothly. The rooms at the Institute for Medical Psychology with their big windows, too, deserve a mention – we felt very comfortable and had enough space to mingle and socialise. Even the weather seemed to cooperate in its own way: after a sweltering Thursday, the rain that arrived Friday evening was a welcome relief, and many of us stayed longer as a reprieve from the lashing rain to continue chatting and sharing ideas. Moments like these capture what makes the HGGs special: it brings together researchers from different fields, encourages genuine exchange, and fosters a positive environment where research can thrive. And in doing so, it makes our academic journey less lonely, academia a little more human, and brings us all closer together.

Eva Marie Heimers, Gamze Altinyaprak, Karla Alvarado, Mariia Korneeva, Yuan Wang and Anna-Zoë Herr.

HGGs Forum Team 2026



Yuan, Gamze, Karla, Zoë, Eva and Mariia (left to right, with Dr Rees in the middle).

Abdullah Rubaet Chowdhury

Scientific Exploration Society's Award to Safeguard 18,000-Year-Old Indigenous Knowledge in Nepal's Himalayas



Abdullah in the Mustang region of Nepal, June 2026.

Abdullah Rubaet Chowdhury (Robin), has been named the 2026 Scientific Exploration Society (SES) Elodie Sandford Award recipient. This is in recognition of his past and ongoing ethnography work exploring the intersection of Indigenous knowledge, political ecology, and global biodiversity governance. His current PhD fieldwork is based in Nepal's Mustang region among the Bönpo community; one of the world's oldest continuous knowledge traditions, dating back 18,000 years.

Set against the high-altitude trans-Himalayan desert of the Kali Gandaki Gorge, the world's deepest gorge at 5,500 meters, surrounded by the 8,000-meter peaks of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, Abdullah's research tackles a critical modern crisis: communities located at the forefront of the climate crisis.

Unlike traditional, top-down conservation science, his methodology avoids extraction of local knowledge and is instead built on co-production. The goal is to bridge ancient stewardship practices, rooted in deep relationality with the more-than-human world and with contemporary global biodiversity policy, ensuring the community retains full ownership of their heritage.

AWARDS

Abdullah Rubaet Chowdhury

Anthropology
Faculty of Behavioural and
Cultural Studies
Heidelberg University

As part of this award, Abdullah will produce visual ethnography materials which will be showcased at the Royal Institute of Surgeons in London on 12th October 2026.

The award video can be seen at
<https://tinyurl.com/3nfr7zs3>

About the Scientific Exploration Society (SES):
The UK-based Scientific Exploration Society supports trailblazing pioneers who lead expeditions combining adventure, science, and conservation.

Prof. Dr. Kama Maclean

Opus Magnum Award

HGGS Board Member, Prof. Dr. Kama Maclean, is the 2026 recipient of a “Opus Magnum Award”. The award, granted by Volkswagen Stiftung, will grant her time a new book. It is foreseen that she will complete her work on “Feeling Disobedience: Listening to Anticolonialism in Interwar India” in 2027.

This book draws on the possibilities offered by relatively new research approaches such as sound studies, sensory histories and histories of emotions, and combines them to write a new history of anti-colonial mobilisation in interwar India, a period dominated by M.K. Gandhi. This approach explores in greater depth the question of how anti-colonialism became popular in South Asia despite widespread illiteracy. Historical analyses of Gandhi's popularity are typically situated in the context of the 1920s, when he first came to the fore in organised nationalism. However, none of the previous studies have taken into account the influence of new communication technologies – in particular loudspeakers, microphones, film and radio – which made their way into India in the late 1920s and not only created new soundscapes but also had other sensory effects that can be understood in the light of recent contributions to the history of emotions. This combination transformed and consolidated Gandhi's power and charisma. In India in particular, visual media – above all photographs, as well as silent and sound films – served to present Gandhi as a leading figure. Ultimately, by listening to the archive, we can better understand how Gandhi lost the support of the Dalits and Muslims by creating experiences through sound that alienated them.

Abstract from the website of Volkswagen Stiftung:
<https://projektdatenbank.volkswagenstiftung.de/projekt/0203109>

AWARDS

Prof. Dr. Kama Maclean

Faculty of Philosophy
Heidelberg University



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“In India in particular, visual media – above all photographs, as well as silent and sound films – served to present Gandhi as a leading figure.”

Lisa Stehr

CHAN Fellowship

Global health research runs on at least two things: crossing borders and asking how health systems can serve people better. I am thrilled to say I get to do both at once, having been awarded a fellowship in the CHAN Program, the China Harvard Africa Network Program in Global Adolescent Health for 2026 to 2027, hosted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The program brings together graduate and postgraduate fellows for a full year of mentored research, with Harvard leading the training curriculum, the mentoring structure, and the seed funding that lets small fellow groups run an entire study from scratch. We started with an online seminar series on the foundations of adolescent health, from development and nutrition to mental health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, followed by monthly virtual sessions pairing expert led lectures with work in progress feedback.

What sets the CHAN fellowship apart is that the learning does not stay theoretical. My group of three fellows is running our own small scale study completely independently, from writing the ethics application and designing the study, through data collection in the field, to analysis and dissemination. Every two weeks, we meet with a team of four mentors to present our progress and troubleshoot whatever the project has thrown at us that week, a level of structured support that has made tackling the whole research cycle feel far less daunting.

Our project aims to improve menstrual and reproductive health literacy among adolescent girls in Addis Ababa, using a structured WhatsApp based messaging intervention delivered over six weeks. In January, my group will travel to Ethiopia for four to six weeks of fieldwork, working with local schools and partners to pilot the intervention with around two hundred girls across intervention and control sites. We will present our preliminary findings at a fellowship symposium in Boston, USA, in May 2027 and I am excited for the months ahead.

AWARDS

Lisa Stehr

**Global Health
Faculty of Medicine
Heidelberg University**



“What sets the CHAN fellowship apart is that the learning does not stay theoretical.”

Valentina Pernet Plazas

Speaking German, Sharing Colombian History

On 7 August, I gave my first academic presentation in German in my A2.2 German course at IIK Deutschland in Düsseldorf. The course is part of the language training offered through the DAAD-GSSP Scholarship supporting my doctoral studies at the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HGGS).

For my presentation, I chose a topic that is particularly close to my heart: the historical memory of the Indigenous movement in Colombia, with a focus on the National Organisation Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas de Colombia – Gobierno Mayor. Being able to speak about my research interests in German was both a challenge and a very rewarding experience. It was also a reminder that learning a new language is not only about grammar and vocabulary, but about gradually gaining the confidence to share ideas, research and experiences with others.

I am very happy and grateful for this new experience. Step by step, I am learning German, and, little by little, I am finding my voice in another language.



RESEARCH NEWS

Valentina Pernet Plazas

**Sociocultural Anthropology
Faculty of Behavioural and
Cultural Studies
Heidelberg University**



“a topic that is particularly close to my heart: the historical memory of the Indigenous movement in Colombia, with a focus on the National Organisation Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas de Colombia – Gobierno Mayor.”

Hassan Maarfi Poor

English Immersion and London Intellectuals

From 3 to 14 August 2026, I attended an intensive English course at B2–C1 level at LSI Education in central London. LSI is an international language school that offers language courses in London as well as in other cities across the UK and the United States. Central London is easily accessible by bus and Underground. At the start of my studies, I had the opportunity to meet numerous intellectuals, including Professor Martin W. Bauer at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), with whom I was able to discuss life and studying in London, as well as other topics.

I attended this course to refresh and improve my English. This is helpful because I often speak English in my research work and would like to improve my job prospects after completing my PhD. In my opinion, both the teaching staff and support staff at LSI, as well as the students, were very friendly and supportive. I was able to improve my English in a wonderful setting.

The only problem I had was that I was living in South Croydon, on the outskirts of this city of 14 million people. As I had to travel by regional train every day – rather than by the Underground – I had to buy a five-zone train ticket, as the journey took a good hour each way.

I have been to London three times in total. Thanks to Villigst Studienwerk, I had the opportunity to take an excellent English course and, in my spare time, to go to the British Library to work on my doctoral thesis. I was sent a British Library membership card, which allows me to carry out research at the library for three years. So I will certainly be making further visits to London.

The course programme included a wide range of visits to London's many museums, which enriched my stay culturally and broadened my educational horizons. At social gatherings, such as the Friday pub nights, I was able to make international contacts and practise the English I'd learnt.

I would recommend attending such a course, even though the prices for LSI English courses are quite high compared to English courses in Germany. It is only by spending time in English-speaking countries that it is possible to learn correct pronunciation and correct existing mistakes. Immersion in the language, which also takes place outside the classroom, means that a course in an English-speaking city allows for continuous engagement with the language and a deep immersion in it.

RESEARCH NEWS

Hassan Maarfi Poor

Philosophy Department
Faculty of Philosophy



Hassan Maarfi Poor with
Prof. Martin W. Bauer, LSE

"Thanks to Villigst Studienwerk, I had the opportunity to take an excellent English course and, in my spare time, to go to the British Library to work on my doctoral thesis."

Yanyi Zheng

Anthropological Fieldwork in Bali on Digital Nomads, Mobility, Place and Space

Since December 2025, I have been conducting a one-year anthropological fieldwork in Bali on digital nomads, mobility, place, and space. The term Digital Nomad, referring to mobile professionals who work remotely, has rapidly evolved into a global lifestyle trend. As one of the earliest and most influential hubs, Bali continues to attract this community, shaping this lifestyle while, in turn, being continually shaped by their presence.

During my first few months, I was struck by what many people here call the “Canggu Bubble”. It describes the concentrated cluster of co-working spaces, café, fitness centers, and social venues near Canggu where digital nomads live, work, and socialize, creating a distinct and recognizable environment within Bali. Over time, I came to see that this ecosystem is supported and shaped by a wide range of actors: Balinese landowners and service providers; Indonesians from other regions seeking investment or job opportunities; long-term foreign residents; international investors building digital-nomad-oriented infrastructure; tourists drawn to the atmosphere; digital nomads from around the world; and both the Bali provincial government and the Indonesian national government.

Alongside these broader structures are the everyday lives and emotions of the people who inhabit this place. Beyond the polished images seen on social media, there are also moments of loneliness, uncertainty, hardship, suffering, and struggle. Digital nomads and local residents experience life here through different expectations, pressures, and sources of meaning, yet all of these experiences unfold within the same small stretch of land.



RESEARCH NEWS

Yanyi Zheng

Anthropology
Faculty of Behavioural and
Cultural Studies
Heidelberg University



“Over time, I came to see that this ecosystem is supported and shaped by a wide range of actors ...”

Alexander Reindl

A Productive Year with Conference Trips

For me, this year has been more productive on every level of my PhD than I would have thought. At first sight, analysing Arabic-language caricatures in French Algeria shortly before World War I seems like shutting myself away in a niche topic and going crazy for lack of good sources. Luckily, this isn't the case. Like many PhD students before me, I've had to realise that the trick doesn't lie in finding material but in knowing what to leave out.

And here, I can talk about one aspect of my productive year: hunting, processing and analysing my material. After collecting an estimated myriad of files on trips to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris and the Archives nationales d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence last year, I was in danger of being crushed by all the material. However, I've managed to rummage and dig my way through it and some almost meticulously sorted data—at least I'm convincing myself of my sorting skills—are now stored on my laptop. So, this year's theme so far has been "Analysis, Analysis, Analysis." As of September, I've indeed managed to analyse all caricatures I've found and currently, I'm preparing the text analysis of some French colonial records and Arabic newspaper articles.

My year consisted not only of data analysis, but also of two conference trips to Rome and to Freiburg. At the first conference in February, I presented the current status of my work at a doctoral conference about "Inside and Outside." The topic was broad and, therefore, many young scholars from almost every possible discipline in the humanities and social sciences presented their research. In the aftermath, the organisers surprised the attendees with conference proceedings that they plan to publish this December. Hence, writing an article for this publication was added to my list of tasks for this year. The article is still in the making. But I'm nevertheless happy that I'll be able to share a small insight into my research. By contrast, I was just a guest in a seminar about the history of ideas at the institute for political science in Freiburg and didn't have to present anything. This fact and a wine feast that took place at the same time by coincidence made this trip feel like an academic vacation.

RESEARCH NEWS

Alexander Reindl

Islamic Studies
Faculty of Philosophy
Heidelberg University

"Like many PhD students before me, I've had to realise that the trick doesn't lie in finding material but in knowing what to leave out."



View of San Carlo al Corso from the Spanish Steps, Rome, Feb. 2026

These aren't the only academic trips I'm going to make this year. At the beginning of October, I'm happy to attend a conference in Tbilisi focusing specifically on the analysis of caricatures in a globalised world. I'm joined by my supervisor and dear colleague Gamze Altinyaprak. In November, I'll have the honour to present my PhD work at the biggest conference in my field in Boston.

To conclude, I've been quite productive this year and I've been wondering how I've managed to juggle everything at once since I had to teach during the semester also. Maybe I don't have to figure out this enigma, but only have to be happy that I haven't been run over by the academic machine.



Aristoteles guarding the entry of Freiburg's university, July 2026

RESEARCH NEWS

Alexander Reindl

Islamic Studies
Faculty of Philosophy
Heidelberg University

"I've been quite productive this year and I've been wondering how I've managed to juggle everything at once since I had to teach during the semester also."

Brando Mesa Cabrera

A Summer School in Italy

Between July 20 and 31, 2026, I took part in the Intensive Weeks in Psychology and Neuroscience program, offered by the Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science at the University of Trento, Italy. Held annually, the program brings together participants from around the world for two weeks of intensive study. This year, we explored the fascinating field of behavioral addictions emerging from compulsive and hyperconnected use of digital technologies. Discussions ranged from social media and video games to research on the processes unfolding in human-robot interaction.

Beyond the academic program, the cultural exchange was itself remarkable. Participants came from around ten different countries, spanning academic stages from high school to doctoral studies. In psychology, we constantly discuss the value of group diversity, but there's no real substitute for the experience of actually sharing a group this diverse.

Italy was stunning, from the breathtaking views of the Dolomites and Lake Maggiore to the canals of Venice, a wine tasting that turned into a psychological experiment, and an Argentine asado made by an actual Argentine professor. We also got a small taste of Italian bureaucracy, when a police officer at the immigration office refused to recognize my visa over a missing document, leading me to think that maybe bureaucracy works the same way everywhere. The solution was very Cuban: stop worrying about it and enjoy the city instead.

Many thanks to the HGGS and the Baden-Württemberg Foundation for their support with travel costs, and especially to our colleagues at the University of Trento's Department of Psychology for this opportunity.



RESEARCH NEWS

Brando Mesa Cabrera

Faculty of Psychology
Universidad de La Habana
Cuba

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation

“In psychology, we constantly discuss the value of group diversity, but there's no real substitute for the experience of actually sharing a group this diverse.”



Lars Link

Animal-Assisted Interventions in Psychotherapy (TIER)

My doctoral research over the past years has focused on how (biological and artificial) intelligence is conceptualized across neuroscience and related disciplines. While this work is still ongoing, 2026 has also marked an important transition in my professional path: after completing my psychotherapy training in systemic therapy, I received my German license (Approbation) to practice as a psychotherapist.

In August, another new chapter began when I joined the research group Animal-Assisted Interventions in Psychotherapy (TIER) at the Institute for Psychosocial Prevention and Psychotherapy at Heidelberg University Hospital. The group investigates how animals can be integrated into psychotherapeutic settings and, more importantly, how their potential effects can be studied scientifically. My new colleagues therefore include not only psychologists and psychotherapists, but also some considerably furrier team members.



RESEARCH NEWS

Lars Link

Institute for Psychosocial
Prevention and Psychotherapy
Faculty of Medicine
Heidelberg University



*“My new colleagues (...)
include not only
psychologists and
psychotherapists, but also
some considerably furrier
team members.”*

Animal-assisted interventions are becoming increasingly visible in psychotherapy, but many questions remain open. Which patients may benefit most? What exactly changes when a dog, horse or alpaca becomes part of a therapeutic setting? And through which psychological or biophysiological mechanisms might such interventions influence therapeutic processes? The TIER research group approaches these questions through studies of dog- and horse-assisted psychotherapy, the evaluation of existing treatment programs and basic research on possible mechanisms. My own work will initially focus particularly on dog-assisted psychotherapy and on the challenge of investigating interactions between patients, therapists and animals empirically.

For me, this new position brings together different parts of my professional development. My doctoral work has taught me to approach complex psychological concepts from an interdisciplinary research perspective, while my psychotherapy training has increasingly shifted my attention toward clinical processes and therapeutic relationships. Working in animal-assisted psychotherapy research now offers the opportunity to connect both perspectives in a field in which many fundamental questions are still waiting to be answered. I am curious to see where this new research path will lead me.



RESEARCH NEWS

Lars Link

**Institute for Psychosocial
Prevention and Psychotherapy
Faculty of Medicine
Heidelberg University**

*“What exactly changes when
a dog, horse or alpaca
becomes part of a
therapeutic setting?”*

*“I am curious to see
where this new
research path will lead
me.”*

Margherita Lanza

Rewriting the Margins

The Summer Semester 2026 was my first semester based in Heidelberg: my doctorate is a cotutelle between Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg and Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, and I moved from Venice in March. My dissertation, "Rewriting the Margins: Queer Identity in 1928 Literature", reads a cluster of six modernist novels published in 1928 through queer theory, feminist narratology and the history of sexuality.

Within HGGS I took part in the Introductory Workshop and, on 28 April, presented the state of my research at the Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium, where the questions from colleagues in other disciplines proved particularly useful in clarifying how I frame the project for non-specialists. I presented at three international conferences over the summer. In June I gave "Hearing Time: Sounds in Woolf's Orlando", co-written with Alison Ehringer and Anna Lorenzon, at the 35th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf (İstanbul Bilgi University, 24 to 28 June). In July I presented "Queer Moons: Weird Modernism in Barnes's 1928 Book" at the BAMS/MSA Joint Annual Conference in Loughborough (1 to 4 July), and "Queer Authority" in Djuna Barnes's Ladies Almanack at the conference "Gender, Authority, and Trust" in the American Studies Department here in Heidelberg (10 to 11 July). In addition, Two publications are forthcoming: an article on Woolf and the panorama in the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, Issue 105, Panoramic Woolf (Fall 2026), and a book chapter arising from the Heidelberg conference.

Alongside this I followed Prof. Mitrano's seminar cycle on aesthetic modernism and critical theory at Ca' Foscari, attended two Open Science webinars in the 4EU+ "Open for You!" series, joined the Graduate Academy's Focused Writing Group, and began the Baden-Württemberg-Zertifikat für Hochschuldidaktik at the HDZ, where I have completed 30 of the 200 required work units.

Last but not least, I am now writing from Annecy, France, where I am taking part in a French course of three weeks at IFALPES organised by the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes. It was an extremely intense period but I am sure the work will bear fruit!



RESEARCH NEWS

Margherita Lanza

English Studies
Faculty of Modern
Languages
Heidelberg University
and
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia



"It was an extremely intense period but I am sure the work will bear fruit!"



Eliana Pilar Cossio Coca

Excursion to the New Age Rainbow Tribes

Taking a short break from my PhD research at the libraries at Heidelberg University, I participated in the 8th Amawtic-Tiwanakota Planetary Gathering of the New Age Rainbow Tribes in the Harz Mountains from 16-26 June 2026.

The gathering, which is based on Andean culture, allowed me to collect important materials for my doctoral project, titled "WARMIPACHAKUTI: Theory and Practice of the *K'apajj Ñam* (Right Path) of the Universal Amawtic School of Choque Paxcha, Tiwanaku." Applying a methodological approach based on Transformative Participatory Action Research, I gathered information from European "tribes" to fulfill my research objective: explaining the sociocultural revolution process of the *Kapajj Ñam* within the *Warmipachakuti* of the Choqepaxcha Amawtic School across various locations of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), specifically in European contexts (Spain, Germany, France) and American ones (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina).

The event aimed to unite these tribes and activate a significant point along a mountain range of great energetic importance to Europe. Furthermore, it fostered interaction among diverse cultures; participants came primarily from Germany, but also from Austria, Poland, Portugal, Bolivia, and Peru. The gathering revived ceremonies and rituals centered on ancestral cultural identities and promoted world peace - a key element of Amawtism rooted in cross-cultural connection and exchange, as well as the participants' individual and collective inner work.



RESEARCH NEWS

Eliana Pilar Cossio Coca

Faculty of Social Sciences
Universidad Mayor de
San Andrés
Bolivia

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation



"The gathering revived ceremonies and rituals centered on ancestral cultural identities and promoted world peace - a key element of Amawtism rooted in cross-cultural connection and exchange..."

One of the objectives of my stay in Heidelberg was to obtain data from various European countries relevant to my research topic. The gathering provided valuable information for the data collection phase, which will be processed during the next, more advanced stage of her research, specifically the coding and theoretical elaboration phases. Additionally, the event addressed the special education needed by New Era generations, as well as cross-cultural coexistence during this time of the “Warmipachakuti”. I have been closely involved in this field since 2014 through my research, conducted as part of the inter-university Master’s Program in Anthropology of Ibero-America, which earned me an award from the Universities of Valladolid, Salamanca, and León in Spain.



RESEARCH NEWS

Eliana Pilar Cossio Coca

**Faculty of Social Sciences
Universidad Mayor de
San Andrés
Bolivia**

**South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation**



Timur Mitrofanov

Digital Humanities and the Diaspora Press

I am a PhD candidate in Russian History at Heidelberg University and a member of the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Over the past year, my work has focused on a Digital Humanities project dedicated to analyzing the diaspora press.

This research has taken me across a series of stimulating workshops and conferences, beginning with the 7th Baltic Summer School of Digital Humanities in Riga (4–8 August 2025). This summer, I participated in the 30th Biennial AABS Conference, "Diasporas: Building Bridges Across Nations," at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (28–30 May 2026), followed by the "Doing Migration History with Digital Methods" summer school at the German Historical Institute in Paris (22–26 June 2026) and the HGGG Summer Forum, "ImA(I)gining the Future: How Digital Technologies Rewrite Our World," at Heidelberg University (16–17 July 2026). Looking ahead, I am excited to share my findings at the European Association for Digital Humanities Conference, "Linking Europe: Digital Humanities Without Borders," hosted by Jagiellonian University in Kraków this September (15–19 September 2026).

These exchanges helped shape the initial findings that my colleagues and I published in an online piece for the Leibniz Association's Value of the Past blog titled "What Algorithms Find in Latvian Exile Newspapers: Songs, Maps, and the Paradoxes of Digital Reading" (14.04.2026, <https://doi.org/10.58079/162d7>). We are currently expanding these ideas into a full peer-reviewed journal article and look forward to presenting our comprehensive results in the near future.



RESEARCH NEWS

Timur Mitrofanov

**Russian History
Faculty of Philosophy
Heidelberg University**



Leibniz Association's Value of the
Past blog

"What Algorithms Find in Latvian
Exile Newspapers: Songs, Maps, and
the Paradoxes of Digital Reading"

14.04.2026

<https://doi.org/10.58079/162d7>



Emely Corcho Rosales

Discovering the Diversity of the World from the City of Heidelberg and the HGGS

Coming to Heidelberg was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had. Being able to share with students from other countries, learn about their research and their ways of doing research, and learn from different cultural traditions has been wonderful. This stay not only gave me the opportunity to improve my professional training, also to feel part of a group and a country different from my own. On weekends and conference trips, I was able to visit beautiful cities such as Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Strasbourg, and some others.

I had the opportunity to take part in the summer program “intensive weeks in Psychology and Neuroscience” at the University of Trento, Italy, which contributed to my doctoral training and allowed me to keep sharing with students from all over the world. Thanks to the BWS, I visited the European Parliament and attended one of its working sessions. I got to know the classrooms and professors of Heidelberg University. I am grateful for having shared in German traditions and festivals. It has been an opportunity for me to discover the diversity of the world from the city of Heidelberg and the HGGS.



RESEARCH NEWS

Emely Corcho Rosales

Faculty of Psychology
Universidad de La Habana
Cuba

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation



“It has been an opportunity for me to discover the diversity of the world from the city of Heidelberg and the HGGS.”

Albis Pabón

Cutting-Edge Research

Heidelberg, a magical city, is renowned for its mountains, medieval architecture, and iconic castle. In addition, the university, through its facilities and access to a wealth of scientific literature, facilitated a high-level research immersion experience.

In particular, this experience was enhanced at the “Study Hub,” a physical space equipped with the necessary infrastructure to promote concentration and optimize academic activities. Consequently, unrestricted access to repositories and internationally recognized indexed databases provided a valuable opportunity for research training.

Added to this was the ability to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives and foster intellectual autonomy by strengthening critical thinking, updating methodological approaches, and identifying cutting-edge research trends within one of Europe’s most prestigious institutions.

These were invaluable resources that made my time at Heidelberg University an undeniably impressive, enriching, and fulfilling personal and academic experience.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Cástor David Mora and Dr. Astrid Wind for guiding me on this academic journey.

I take my leave with the firm intention of maintaining active bridges of international collaboration through the HGGS.

See you soon, Heidelberg!



Albis (right) with her colleagues on an excursion to Heiligenberg.

RESEARCH NEWS

Albis Pabón

Faculty of Humanities and
Education
Universidad de Los Andes
Venezuela

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation



*“invaluable resources that
made my time at
Heidelberg University an
undeniably impressive,
enriching, and fulfilling
personal and academic
experience.”*

Mary Maldonado

HGGS Colloquia - A Memorable Experience

Taking part in the colloquia was a meaningful experience, not only because of the topics covered, but also because of the way it transformed my understanding of the research process. From the very first session, an atmosphere of anticipation was created, followed by critical exchanges that prompted us to re-examine our own truths in the light of the horizontal perspective that had emerged. The lecturers on the South-South-North programme, Dr. Astrid Wind and Prof. Cástor David Mora, acted as mediators rather than examiners; their experience in scientific research guided us effectively through the steps to follow, as each piece of work demonstrated the complexity required of those with a track record in research. The sessions became a space where theory ceased to be intangible and became tangible, with its political, historical-social and pedagogical value, under the rigour demanded by the researcher's craft.

As experiences were shared, one of the most memorable moments arose from the precision of the methods, as choosing a topic involved verifying the process of studying the phenomenon in question. Those reflections with the lecturers and fellow exchange students allowed for a deeper interpretation, as listening to each contribution gave rise to a hermeneutic process. From that moment on, I realised that research goes beyond mere citation: it is about questioning, deconstructing and constructing. The methodology of the colloquia - open, dialogical and critical - connected me with the need to articulate the epistemological with the experiential in a situated manner.

Of course, the whole process of knowledge exchange led me to reflect with a view to transformation. It was not merely about the knowledge generated, but about having strengthened an attitude of conscious and reflective study. The experience left me convinced that this activity is not merely an academic requirement, but goes further: it is a space for interpreting, understanding and making clearer progress on the research project. Therefore, the colloquia will remain one of the most memorable experiences of my doctoral studies at Heidelberg University.



RESEARCH NEWS

Mary Maldonado

Faculty of Humanities and
Education
Universidad de Los Andes
Venezuela

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation



"Those reflections with the lecturers and fellow exchange students allowed for a deeper interpretation, as listening to each contribution gave rise to a hermeneutic process."

Alejandro Daniel Castellón Gorená

A Journey to Ourselves and to Strasbourg

Sometimes we find ourselves in the middle of life, at one of those moments when the decisions we make can shape much of our future. At the same time, the place where we happen to be can lead us to understand our own place in that future and everything we may be able to influence. Recently, a group of students from Heidelberg University travelled to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. The visit was organised by a fellow student and this, I believe, is precisely how activities of this kind should emerge: from personal initiative. The search, the journey, the place, the hidden dreams - studying will always somehow rhyme with walking, with being on the move. It all began with an initial idea that occurred to one of our fellow students and that the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM kindly helped to make possible.

It began in our WhatsApp group: comments, posts, schedules, questions, clarifications, emotions, plans ... until the day finally came when we met. We encountered people from so many different countries that our group became, in a light-hearted way, a small reflection of the Parliament we were about to visit: Germany, Cuba, India, Ethiopia, Botswana, South Korea, Namibia and Bolivia. We ranged in age from 22 to 50 and included Bachelor's and Master's graduates as well as doctoral candidates. We were all engaged in a process of learning and shared a curiosity that opens doors - a curiosity that helped us connect with one another very quickly. After leaving our belongings at the hotel, taking public transport across the city and walking for a short while, we reached the modern building of the European Parliament. With its many windows and its location surrounded by water, the architecture seems deliberately designed to reflect the transparency of the work carried out there. As you approach the building, you become increasingly aware that the decisions made within those spaces affect millions of people. That awareness gives the visit a powerful sense of responsibility and significance.

After entering the building and passing through the security checks, we had the opportunity to speak with a parliamentary representative from a German political party. He presented his arguments and political position in a way that was certainly new to us. Through irony and humour, he sought to distinguish his way of communicating political ideas from more conventional approaches—and, at the very least, he certainly succeeded in capturing our full attention. We took photographs in areas displaying works of art, gifts from presidents and symbols that convey something of the character and history of different peoples. Perhaps these objects are intended to give these spaces a soul, a heart, a shared subjectivity and a common sense of purpose - to humanise the corridors through which so many different paths intersect.

RESEARCH NEWS

Alejandro Daniel
Castellón Gorená

Faculty of Social Sciences
Universidad Mayor de
San Andrés
Bolivia

South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation



We then entered the large plenary chamber, where debates and presentations take place according to a specific agenda. On this occasion, the subject was the European Union's position regarding the war between Ukraine and Russia. Many of the parliamentarians' interventions centred on arguments in favour of becoming more involved or participating more actively in the conflict. As I listened, I found myself wondering silently: Is nobody going to speak about peace? Could we not consider other possibilities? What if we searched for different paths? These and similar phrases often sound very convincing during election campaigns, yet when political practice begins, they sometimes seem far less present. Nevertheless, the debate was clearly structured, the report was presented precisely, and the procedures were firmly established. We were standing in a place where many battles of ideas have been fought over issues that concern us all - yes, all of us. What happens in the world we share ultimately affects everyone.

Within this system, the people who are there represent - or should represent - what contributes to the well-being of the majority. I consider this an extraordinarily difficult task. Perhaps it is necessary to return again and again to the foundations of human needs: respect for life, particularly the lives of children and older people; the right to health, education and food; the right to respect the historical place into which we are born, our culture and also our spirituality. Decisions could be made on the basis of such priorities. But this, of course, is the perspective of a non-European visitor who observes these matters through the needs he also encounters in the small part of the world in which he lives and which he shares with others.

RESEARCH NEWS

**Alejandro Daniel
Castellón Gorena**

**Faculty of Social Sciences
Universidad Mayor de
San Andrés
Bolivia**

**South-South-North Scholar,
Baden-Württemberg
Foundation**



Europe matters, because together we can reduce climate change.

together.eu for democracy



"We were standing in a place where many battles of ideas have been fought over issues that concern us all - yes, all of us."

Eventually, it was time to leave. The excitement among all of us was unmistakable. During the bus ride towards the historic city centre, the comments and conversations never stopped. Our still-curious eyes continued to open new paths, hypotheses and suggestions. Opinions were exchanged, and we tried to answer the questions we were all asking ourselves - questions that, in one way or another, concern us all. Then it was time for dinner. We boarded the tram and, almost as if by magic, St Paul's Church suddenly appeared before us. Reflected in the water, it looked like something from a storybook: a small reminder that the traces of earlier human searches and questions remain standing: spiritual, architectural and perhaps poetic. Humanity continues to move forward and persists in revealing itself through all its different forms. Cuisine, surely, is one of them.

Our restaurant was French. They did not have Coca-Cola, but they did have French cola and beer from Hamburg, far away in northern Germany - strange, perhaps, but true. The food was a delight. We shared plates of French fries, got to know one another better and talked about our cultures and our different ways of seeing the world. Perhaps here, in the middle of life, we are not really so different after all. Not despite age differences that in some cases approached thirty years; not despite being born thousands of kilometres apart; and not despite our different languages or our different ways of speaking a language we share. It seems that we can all be surprised by the same things: a plate containing meat that is still half raw, or a French dessert resembling a German cake called Black Forest cake, which, as we discovered, can also be found in Ethiopia, Namibia and Bolivia. Eventually, we realised that the original comes from Germany.

Our conversation then turned to the magnificent Black Forest, which we had discovered while hiking and which had left us deeply impressed—just as this French city was now doing. Suddenly, the world seemed smaller and, in a special way, a little more our own. It was a beautiful feeling. We stepped outside again. The night was still young, as were our spirits, hungry for more. For once the desire to learn begins, it can become a torrent, an expectation, almost a kind of delirium—or simply an open door to possibility. We made our way to Strasbourg Cathedral, the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg. At night, illuminated from within, it presented an image that will remain with us for a long time. Light made its way through the forms of the building and among the gargoyles that seem to stand guard over it. True to its Gothic style, the cathedral reaches upwards. Standing close to it and looking towards the top produces an almost vertiginous sensation: 142 metres of carved stone, constructed over the course of four centuries.

RESEARCH NEWS

**Alejandro Daniel
Castellón Gorena**



"Reflected in the water, it looked like something from a storybook: a small reminder that the traces of earlier human searches and questions remain standing: spiritual, architectural and perhaps poetic."



One begins to understand - or perhaps simply to confirm - that it is precisely in the details of human creations that the extraordinary and the unique reside, making us unable to stop looking at them. One of us spontaneously became our guide. How many stories enrich this place! We were genuinely moved by what we saw, and exclamations of amazement came naturally. Of course, the obligatory night-time photo session followed before we finally returned to the hotel. The next day it rained. The sky was grey, and several members of our group had already returned to their activities. Those of us who remained decided to walk through the historic centre of the city. We crossed its bridges amid the branches of a river that embraces so much of Strasbourg. Old towers and houses were reflected in the water, surrounded by flowers and small spaces that seemed to open unexpectedly, revealing deep streets filled with history. We were moved by what we saw.

It was still raining, and the time had come to return - to our projects, our work, our studies, our homes, or to rooms rented for a limited period of time. A time in which being far away from those we love seems to demand that our experiences be worthwhile: that they be profound and genuine, and that they leave traces we can later share with others. Traces in the details we saw, in the words we heard, in those spaces that seemed, for a moment, to become eternal before our eyes. We, too, will now give these experiences an echo through our small and large contributions to that meaning we understand as human, a humanity that still has so much to learn if we are truly to inhabit this world together. Perhaps we can learn to do so just as we did around a dinner table somewhere in a European city: in peace, learning from one another and building something together.

There is still time.

We are in the middle of life.



RESEARCH NEWS

**Alejandro Daniel
Castellón Gorena**



*“Perhaps we can learn to
do so just as we did around
a dinner table somewhere
in a European city: in
peace, learning from one
another and building
something together.”*

South-South-North Scholars in 2026

The HGGs look back on a rich programme with the South-South-North Scholars in the Summer Semester 2026. This year, seven doctoral scholars from Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela, funded by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, joined the HGGs to carry out research on their PhD projects and to take advantage of the academic activities at Heidelberg University. They also took Masterclasses on “Research Methodology”, “Interdisciplinarity” and “Neurodidactics” with Prof. Cástor David Mora and elaborated academic posters on the respective topics. As a culmination, they contributed articles to this year’s collection of essays, *Scientific Paradigms under Debate: Epistemological, Dialogical and Emancipatory Perspectives for Social Transformation*, edited by Daniel Quintero, Cástor David Mora and Astrid Wind, which has been recently published. Several of the South-South-North Scholars have contributed to this Newsletters and you will thus be able to learn more about their activities during the summer of 2026.

We will miss Albis, Mary, Emely, Eliana, Alejandro, Orlan and Brando as their return home at the end of September, but we look forward to a future collaboration across the miles and to meeting them again in the not too distant future!



South-South-North Programme



*We will miss you and
look forward to
meeting you again
in the not too
distant future!*

Front row (left to right):
Albis Yomaira Pabón Basto
and Mary Ysabel Maldonado
Botello (ULA, Venezuela),
Cástor David Mora and
Astrid Wind; Emely Corcho
Rosales and Brando Mesa
Cabrera (UH, Cuba).

Standing (left to right):
Orlan de Jesús Vielma
Rodríguez (ULA, Venezuela),
Eliana Pilar Cossio Coca and
Alejandro Daniel Castellón
(UMSA, Bolivia).

South-South-North Masterclasses

This Summer Semester, the HGGGS offered three Masterclasses and a series of workshops in three core areas: “Research Methodology”, “Neurodidactics” and “Interdisciplinarity”. The classes were taught by Prof. Cástor David Mora, who initiated the sessions with an in-depth lecture about each topic. Participants had the opportunity to bring in their own perspectives and to ask questions before dividing into groups to work on specific problems and didactic models. In the late afternoon, each group presented their results that were later refined and prepared for publication. As in previous years, Prof. Mora also oversaw the publication of the articles the group produced for the annual South-South-North collection of essays.



Masterclasses with Prof. Cástor David Mora



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SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



UNIVERSITÄT
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ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

South-South-North Masterclass
Research Methodology

1

July 2026

Prof. Cástor David Mora
09:00 - 18:00
HS 04a, Neue Universität
Language: Spanish



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UNIVERSITÄT
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ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

South-South-North Masterclass
Neurodidactics

8

July 2026

Prof. Cástor David Mora
09:00 - 18:00
Gerontologie, Seminarraum 045,
Bergheimer Str. 20, 69115 Heidelberg
Language: Spanish



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FÜR GEISTES- UND
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

South-South-North Masterclass
Interdisciplinarity

15

July 2026

Prof. Cástor David Mora
09:00 - 18:00
HS 04a, Neue Universität
Language: Spanish

“Us and Them” Podcast

Sinan Barış Yaşar has recorded several new episodes of the Podcast series “Us and Them”. He spoke to HGGs members Bahar Akgün about “The Garih Mode in Context, Experience, and Practice: Toward a Cognitive Ecology of Islamic Ornament in Contemporary Architectural Design”, and he interviewed Elizaveta Savina on her research about “Differences Between First Language and Second Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistics and Cognitive Science Perspectives”.

Sinan also interviewed Jun.-Prof. Dr. Rosa Lehmann from the Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies at Heidelberg on her work, “Energy Transition: Socio-Spatial Tensions”. Most recently, he recorded the episode “Sustainability and Sustainable Innovation Management” with Dr. Maximilian Jungmann, Executive Manager of the Heidelberg Center for the Environment (HCE) at Heidelberg University, as well as “Relating to Others: A (Neo)Platonic Metaphysical Approach”, an Interview with PD Dr. Max Rohstock and Anna Maria Lambertz-Rohstock (Department of Philosophy, Heidelberg University). The latest episode is “Consumer Acceptance and Consumer Preferences of Emerging Agrifood Technologies” with Associate Prof. Dr. Marija Banovic (Aarhus University).



Podcast

Sinan Barış Yaşar

**Faculty of Law
Heidelberg University**



Sinan Barış Yaşar and
Dr. Maximilian Jungmann at the
recording studio, Graduate Academy



You can find these and other
episodes on the HGGs website:

<https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/de/ueber-uns/publikationen>

Linktree:

<https://linktr.ee/hggs.heidelberg-university>

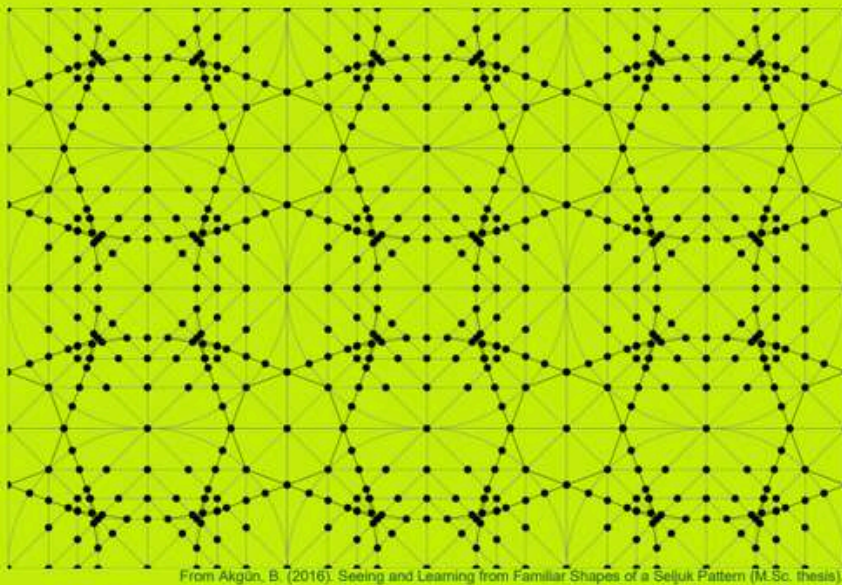
Bahar Akgün

In September, Bahar Akgün was awarded *summa cum laude* for her doctoral thesis, “The Girih Mode in Context, in Experience, and in Practice: Toward a Cognitive Ecology of Islamic Ornament in Contemporary Architectural Design.”

Her Ph.D. project empirically investigates the aesthetic principles shaping the production and reception of the girih mode of Islamic geometric ornament. This interdisciplinary research, encompassing empirical aesthetics, art history, philosophy, and architectural design, has been conducted under the co-supervision of Prof. Dr. Rebecca Sauer (Islamic Studies & Material Culture Studies, University of Zurich), Dr. Rebecca Chamberlain (Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths, University of London), Prof. Dr. Andreas Voß (Department of Psychology, University of Heidelberg), and Prof. Dr. Brigitte Sölch (Architectural and Modern Art History, Heidelberg University).

Bahar has been a distinguished DAAD-GSSP scholar at the HGGS, where she also regularly teaches courses on interdisciplinarity. The next workshop on “Designing and Conducting Interdisciplinary Research” will take place in the Winter Semester 2026/27.

Designing and Conducting Interdisciplinary Research



From Akgün, B. (2016). Seeing and Learning from Familiar Shapes of a Seljuk Pattern (M.Sc. thesis).

PhD Defense

Bahar Akgün

Faculty of Philosophy
Heidelberg University



Pravin Prakash

In September, Pravin Prakash received *summa cum laude* for his doctoral thesis that examines how illiberal social movements in India drive autocratization from below, reshaping state-society relations through violence, disinformation, and mutual legitimization.

Pravin has been a distinguished DAAD-GSSP scholar at the HGGS and a PhD at the Institute of Political Science, Universität Heidelberg, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Aurel Croissant.

In addition to his brilliant research, Pravin also has extensive experience in public policy research and think tank work; he also has an outstanding publishing record and has made his mark as a brilliant and well-liked lecturer and teacher.

Pravin's research is driven by a deep commitment to understanding and addressing the root causes of hate and extremism, with a particular focus on promoting social resilience and developing informed public policy solutions.

PhD Defense

Pravin Prakash

Faculty of Economics
and Social Sciences
Heidelberg University



Pravin with Prof. Rahul Mukherji and with Jonathan Lench and Astrid Wind
24. Sept. 2026



"It 's Dr. Actually!"

Ioannis Stylianidis

Ioannis Stylianidis completed his PhD project in June 2026, entitled “The Representation of Jews in the Greek Press: Towards a Transcultural Perspective of History, Politics, and Memory”, at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg and Heidelberg University as a member of the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HGGS). His research focuses on the critical analysis of contemporary antisemitism and Jewish otherness in Greece, Europe, and beyond. Specifically, Ioannis’s work examines the representation of Jewish narratives and their media discourse within three main contexts: contemporary Greek and European political history, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the study of populism and nationalism in post-conflict societies. Ioannis has presented his work at numerous international academic workshops and conferences, particularly in the fields of History, Cultural Studies, International Studies and Geopolitics, Interfaith Dialogue, and Peacebuilding. Additionally, he has served as an organizer and partner for various fellowships, conferences, and educational and civil-society projects within and beyond his area of expertise. Building on this professional experience, he completed the 4EU+ University Diploma in Entrepreneurial and Project Management at Sorbonne University-CELSA, focusing on Global Leadership, Communication Strategies, Organizational Planning, Innovation, and Sustainability.

In August 2026, Ioannis took part in a summer school in Kavala. He received a scholarship for his participation, and presented a paper on “The Eastern Mediterranean Trilateral Through the Prism of Religion, Identity, and Traumatic Memory.”

Ioannis also contributes to CrossLines (part of EPNA — European Perspectives on the New Antisemitism, run by Dialogue Perspectives), a project aimed at supporting European journalists in reporting on antisemitism. The Resource Hub page is its central repository for this purpose, offering specialized reporting guidelines, best-practice case studies, and a cross-border network of experts to help media professionals deliver nuanced, ethical coverage that strengthens solidarity and counters harmful narratives across Europe. CrossLines' central goal is to support more informed, precise and responsible reporting on antisemitism and Jewish life, while strengthening the ability of Jewish communities and practitioners to engage with media professionals in ways that are confident, secure and constructive. It also aims to understand the long-term needs of both fields and help ensure engagement can be sustained beyond the initial project period (<https://crosslines.info/ressource-hub/>).

PhD Defense

Ioannis Stylianidis

Hochschule für
Jüdische Studien
and
Heidelberg University



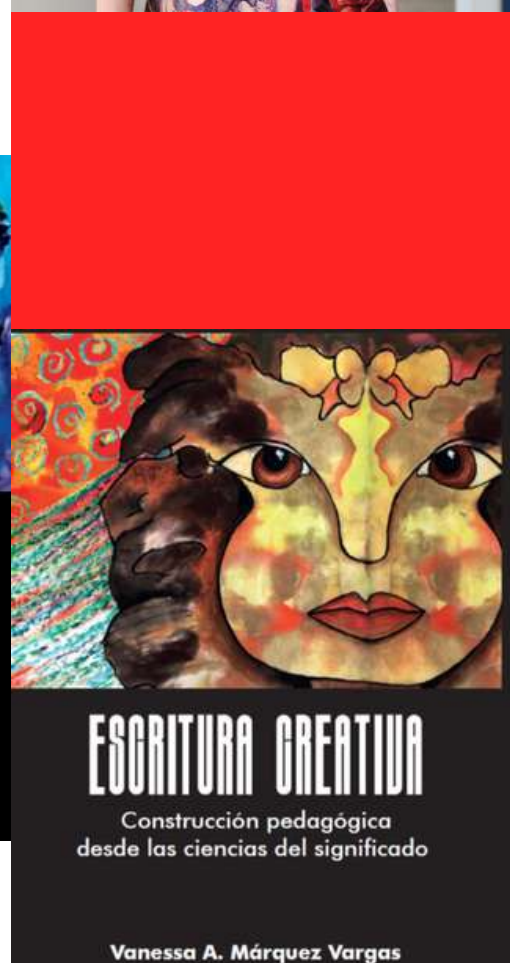
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Dr. Vanessa A. Márquez Vargas

Vanessa A. Márquez Vargas from the Universidad de Los Andes, Venezuela, finished her doctoral thesis entitled “CREATIVE WRITING: Pedagogical approach based on the sciences of meaning” with top marks; in Spanish: “ESCRITURA CREATIVA: Construcción pedagógica desde las ciencias del significado.” Her thesis has recently been published and is available in a digital format on the HGGS website.

Vanessa is currently a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Humanities and Education at the University of Los Andes. Her areas of academic and research interest cover a broad spectrum of topics related to Latin American culture, Hispanic American and Venezuelan literature, the science of meaning and education. She has published articles and contributed to national and international academic journals, centres and institutes.

Vanessa A. Márquez Vargas was a Baden-Württemberg Scholar at the HGGS in 2025 and taught several courses on his expertise at Heidelberg University in 2025 and online in 2026. The results of her creative workshops have been published and are available on the HGGS website.



Publications:

<https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/en/about-us/publications>

Dr. Daniel Acacio Quintero Rodríguez

Daniel Acacio Quintero Rodríguez from the Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela, recently defended his doctoral thesis, "A Critical Construct of Digitality for Interpreting Phenomena in the Contemporary System." In Spanish: "Constructo crítico de la Digitalidad para interpretar los fenómenos del sistema contemporáneo". He was awarded HONOURS for his thesis!

A historian and lawyer who graduated from the University of Los Andes (ULA), with a Master's degree from the Institute of Higher National Studies (IAEN) in the Republic of Ecuador, he completed his doctoral studies in the Humanities at the University of Los Andes (ULA) in Mérida, Venezuela.

He is a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities and Education at ULA, where he teaches the following courses: "History of Political Ideas", "History of Political Thought in the Digital Age" and the seminar "Political Thought in the Information Society". He is the founder and coordinator of the Group for Contemporary Studies on Digitality and Disruptive Histories (GECDHD). He has spent more than fifteen years conducting research into the interplay between technology and society to understand its impact on human beings. He has been a speaker at national and international events, as well as the author of academic articles in journals from around the world. He has also co-authored and edited various books. His research interests include digitality, cognitive capitalism, the ethnography of the intangible, technological simulacra and virtual re-significations. He is a member of the Ibero-American Research Network on Imaginaries and Representations (RIIR).

Daniel Acacio Quintero Rodríguez was a Baden-Württemberg Scholar at the HGGS in 2024 and taught several courses on his expertise for the HGGS.

He is also a principal editor of the South-South-North publications.

PhD Defense

**Dr. Daniel Acacio
Quintero Rodríguez**

**Humanities
Universidad de Los Andes
Venezuela**



"He has spent more than fifteen years conducting research into the interplay between technology and society to understand its impact on human beings."

Dr. Alberto Carballo Soca

Congratulation to Alberto Carballo Soca, South-South-North and Baden-Württemberg Scholar from the Universidad de La Habana, for successfully defending his doctoral thesis on “Development of the CDPro scale to measure teachers’ digital competence in secondary education.”

His PhD work consists of the design and validation of a scale of teaching digital competence. Alberto Carballo Soca also works on digital citizenship, digital education, artificial intelligence literacy and attitudes towards artificial intelligence.

The thesis was recommended for award!

Alberto Carballo Soca was a Baden-Württemberg Scholar at the HGGs in 2025 and taught a course on his expertise for the HGGs.



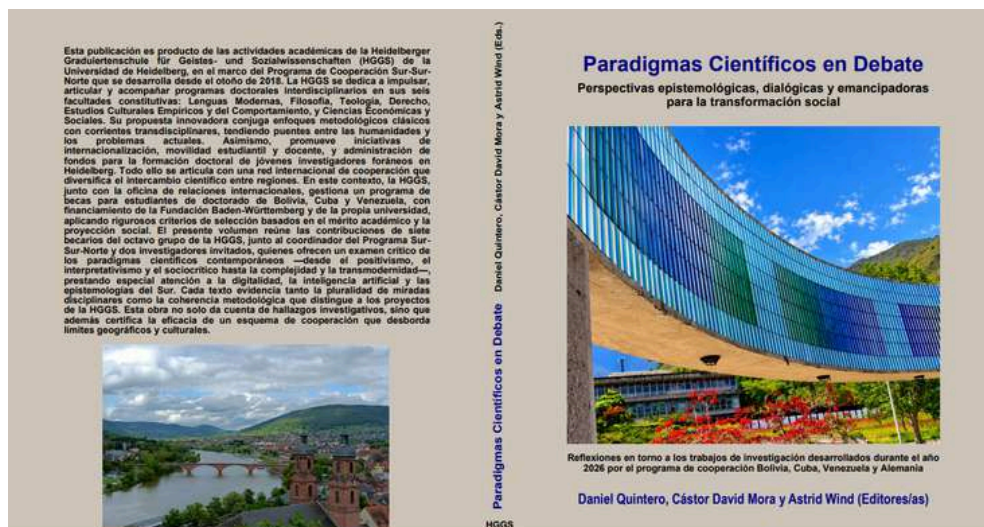
PhD Defense

Dr. Alberto Carballo Soca

Psychology
Universidad de La Habana
Cuba



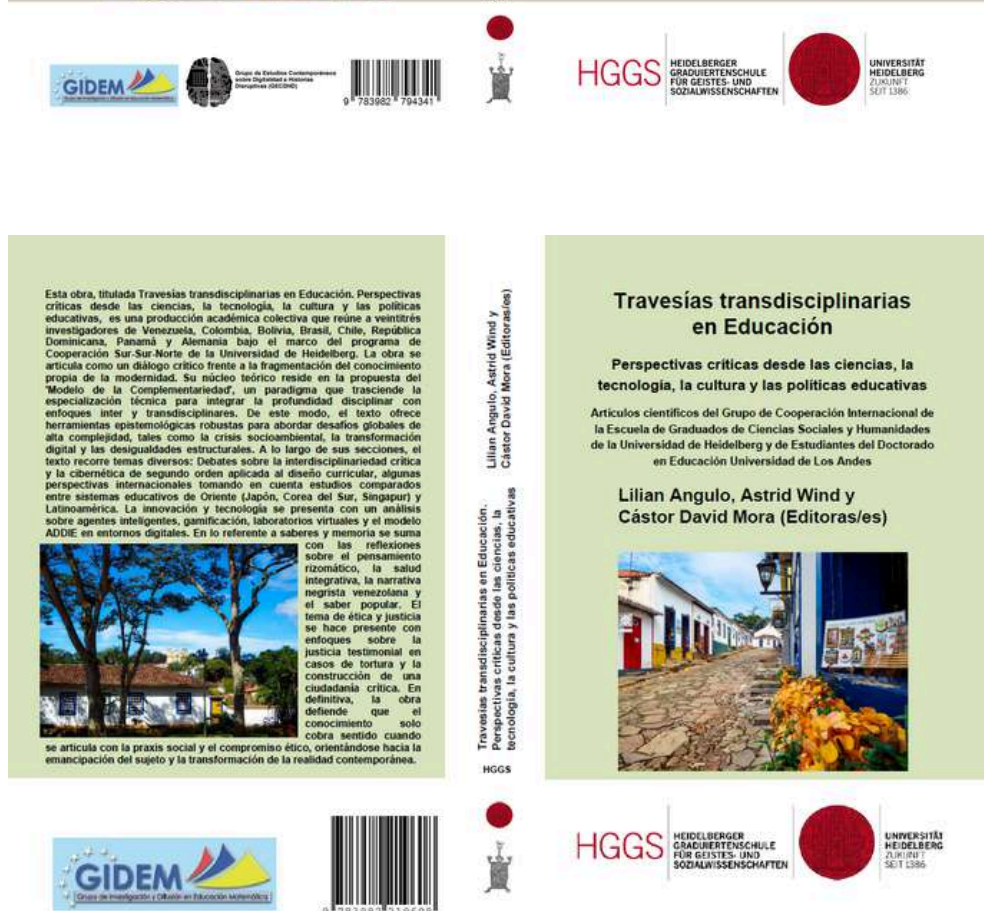
Recent Publications



PUBLICATIONS

Scientific Paradigms under Debate. Epistemological, Dialogical and Emancipatory Perspectives for Social Transformation.

Daniel Quintero,
Cástor David Mora and
Astrid Wind, (Eds.)



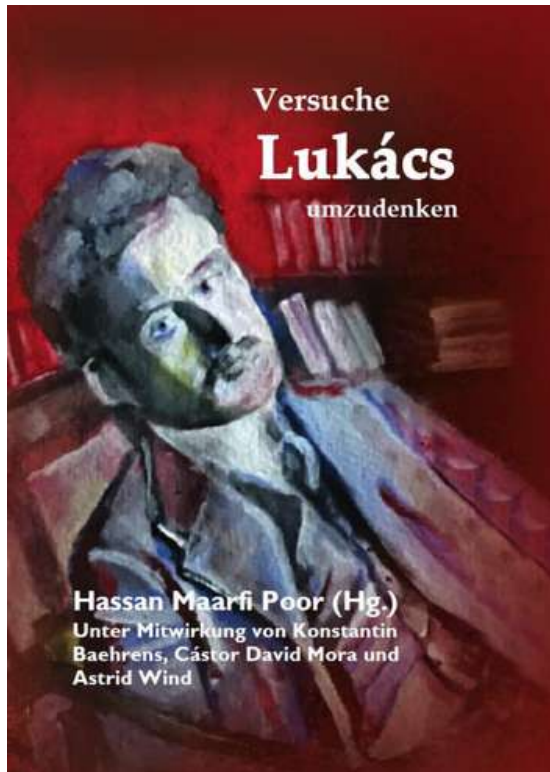
Transdisciplinary Journeys in Education. Critical Perspectives from the Fields of Science, Technology, Culture and Education Policy.

Lilian Angulo,
Astrid Wind and
Cástor David Mora
(Eds.)

Publications:

<https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/en/about-us/publications>

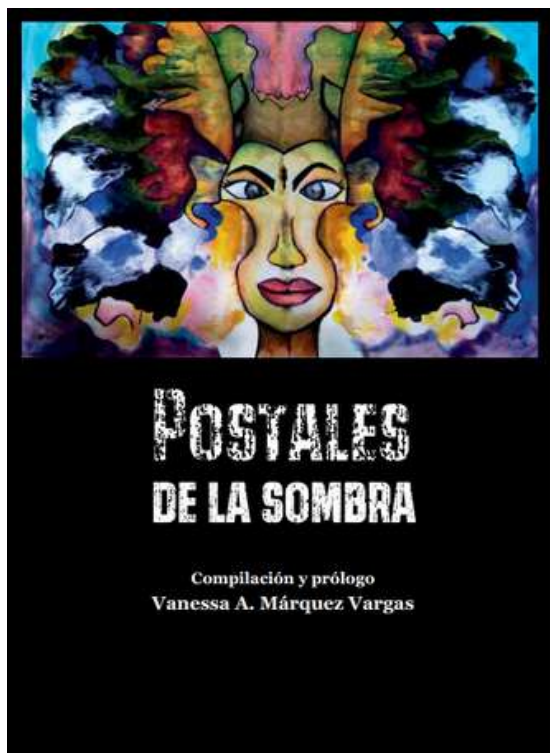
Recent Publications



PUBLICATIONS

Versuche Lukács umzudenken.

Hassan Maarfi Poor (Hg.)
Unter Mitwirkung von
Konstantin Baehrens,
Cástor David Mora und
Astrid Wind



Postcards from the Shadow.

Vanessa A. Márquez
Vargas (Hg.)

Publications:

<https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/en/about-us/publications>

Recent Publications

Beyond GDP: New Nature Health Publication and Open Research Platform

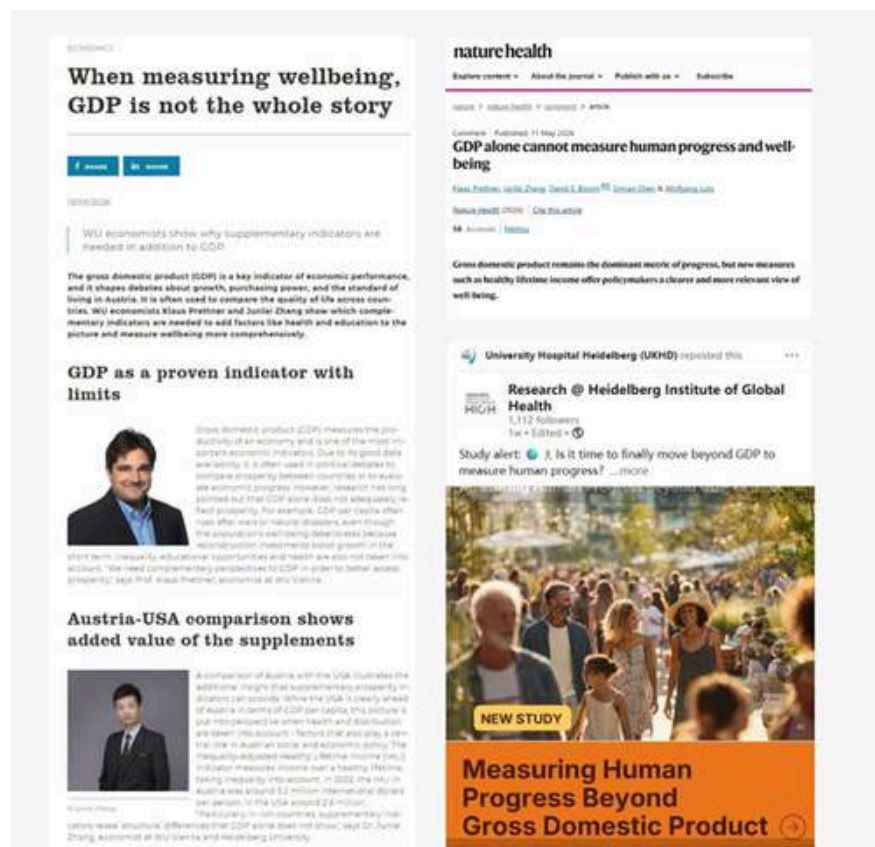
Dr. Junlai Zhang, Research Group Leader of Global Wellbeing Economics at the Heidelberg Institute of Global Health, recently published a new article in Nature Health with Klaus Prettner, David E. Bloom, Simiao Chen, and Wolfgang Lutz on why GDP alone cannot measure human progress and well-being.

The article highlights the need for supplementary indicators that account for health, education, inequality, and environmental quality while retaining the comparability and interpretability of GDP-based measures. Building on this work, Prettner and Zhang have founded the Global Wellbeing Economics Lab together with colleagues from Harvard University, Heidelberg University, Peking Union Medical College, and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). The Lab provides an open database platform with internationally comparable beyond-GDP indicators for researchers and policymakers.

The Global Wellbeing Economics Research Group welcomes applications from prospective PhD researchers, postdoctoral researchers and visiting scholars with strong quantitative skills.

Publication:

Prettner, K., Zhang, J., Bloom, D. E., Chen, S., & Lutz, W. (2026). GDP alone cannot measure human progress and well-being. Nature Health. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44360-026-00137-7>



PUBLICATIONS



Dr. Junlai Zhang

Research Group:
<https://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/heidelberger-institut-fuer-global-health/groups-projects/working-groups/global-wellbeing-economics>

Research Lab:
<https://globalwellbeingeconomicslab.org/>

WU News:
<https://www.wu.ac.at/en/research/research-portal/news/archive-news/detail/when-measuring-wellbeing-gdp-is-not-the-whole-story-1>

HIGH LinkedIn post:
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/research-heidelberg-institute-of-global-health_measuring-human-progress-beyond-gdp-ugcPost-7462410373984370689-P5vR

Winter Semester 2026/27



The HGGG cordially invites all members to present their doctoral projects in the Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium. An invitation will be sent to you via HGGG-DOK. Please, come and share your ideas, theories, methods and join the critical and friendly debates with your peers in the HGGG!

All academic offers will be published on the HGGG website, on HGGG-DOK and on Instagram during the Winter Semester.

Each semester, the HGGG also issues a Call for Applications to all interested doctoral candidates from the six HGGG faculties at Heidelberg University. Please, spread the news about the HGGG at your institute and faculty and invite your peers to join us!



HGGG website:

<https://www.hggg.uni-heidelberg.de/de>

Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium



Instagram:
[hggg.heidelberg](https://www.instagram.com/hggg.heidelberg)

The texts for the newsletter were provided by HGGG members or as indicated. Edition and layout: HGGG.

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Call for Applications: Graduate Membership



Applications:

<https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/en/membership/membership-application>