

MAGAZINE

OF HEINRICH HEINE UNIVERSITY DÜSSELDORF



LITERARY TRANSLATION AT HHU

Successful model since 30 years

► HEINE MEETS
HUXLEY
Brave New World
at HHU

► ERC ADVANCED
GRANT
Accolade for
HHU researcher

► INEQUALITY OF
OPPORTUNITIES
Mentoring for
children

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Editorial team:
Dr. Victoria Meinschäfer (head),
Susanne Dopheide

Editorial assistance:
Frieda Berg, Dr. Arne Claussen, Susanne Dopheide,
Carolin Grape, Thomas Scherer, Jakob Stachow

Translation:
Sharon Oranski, www.oranski.de

Editorial



Photo: Ivo Mayr

Dear Reader

This is the 10th issue of our HHU Magazine and I would like once again to give you an insight into current topics and developments at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf.

A very eventful first six months lie behind us, during which above all the plans for our French Day and the event itself kept us on our toes. I'm pleased to report that our festival on campus together with our French guests was wonderful and a sign of our lively contacts and close partnerships with our neighbouring country.

Reading and publishing play an important role in the academic world – this summer HHU is taking a new approach to reading. Under the title “Heine meets Huxley”, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf is devoting itself to Aldous Huxley's classic novel “Brave New World” and examining it from different scientific perspectives. HHU is one of ten universities sponsored by the joint programme “One University – One Book” of the Stifterverband (Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany), the Klaus Tschira Foundation and the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT. The idea is to inspire a whole university – from student to canteen cook to professor – for one and the same book. In the framework of various events, ranging from an exhibition in the University and State Library, a film evening at University

House, readings and an essay competition, the novel is contemplated and discussed from different scientific perspectives – quite in the tradition of our namesake Heinrich Heine, who as a poet fought with great commitment against a spirit of subservience, suppression as well as political and religious dogmas and for tolerance, autonomy and freedom.

Without its translations into many different languages Huxley's novel would not have achieved such world renown. The special role of literary translators and why computers will remain unable to replace them, why law students sometimes have to get to grips with cocoa beans and why a family's social and economic status can influence a child's career prospects – you can find out about all of this and much more besides in this issue.

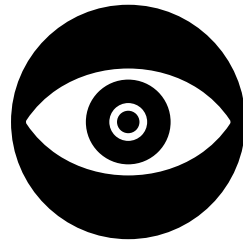
I wish you pleasant reading and all of us continued productive cooperation at international level!

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrea von Hülsen-Esch
Vice-President for International Relations
Email: prorektorin.internationales@hhu.de

Brave New World – Two semesters long on HHU’s campus

“Heine meets Huxley”



BY CAROLIN GRAPE

Under the title “Heine meets Huxley”, Heinrich Heine University is focussing this summer throughout the campus on Aldous Huxley’s world classic “Brave New World” and examining it from very different scientific perspectives.

Why? Because the University is one of ten universities selected in 2018 for the project “One University – One Book” of the Stifterverband (Donors’ Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany – a joint initiative of companies and foundations that provides funding for teaching, research and innovation projects), the Klaus Tschira Foundation and the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT. The idea behind it: To stimulate discussion amongst as many members of a university as possible across all departments and all status groups and inspire them for a common topic by reading the same book.

“Heine meets Huxley” is an initiative of the newly established Science Management Network at HHU (WiN) that aims to boost an exchange of experience, expertise and contacts amongst HHU staff at the interface between science and science management. The network’s intention is to foster close cooperation between science managers working in the University’s different departments and institutes and administrative and other staff, e.g. at the Library or the Centre for Information and Media Technology. Further aims are to support training and generate synergies in cross-cutting themes in order to

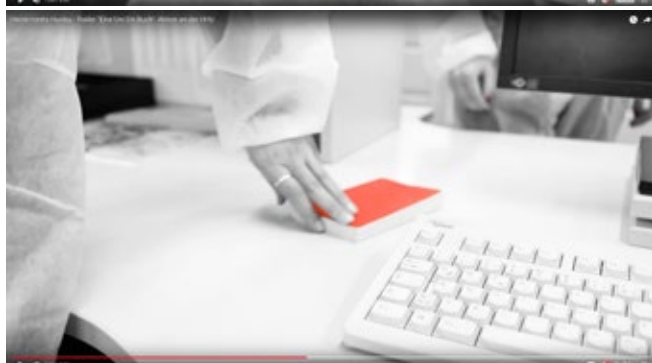
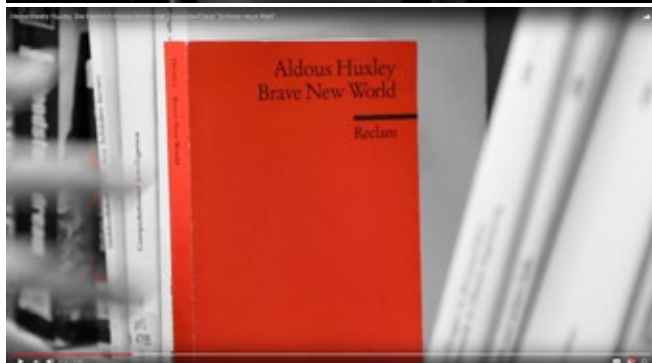
enhance creativity and momentum in future projects through the many different minds involved.

Dr. Madlen Kazmierczak, initiator of the project and founding member of WiN, explains that the book was selected in an online vote amongst HHU’s members: “Reading ‘Brave New World’ matches the spirit of our namesake Heinrich Heine, who as a poet fought with great commitment against suppression as well as political and religious dogmas and for tolerance, autonomy and freedom. What’s more, the novel offers many points of reference for various research topics at

How do we want to live, learn and work?

HHU: For example, economists can consider the challenges of globalisation and consumption against the background of Huxley’s dystopia of a world state, natural scientists and physicians discuss the risks and opportunities of genetic engineering and academics in the arts and humanities raise questions about the freedom of the individual and the omnipresence of social norms.”

How do we want to live, learn and work (in future)? The novel encourages its readers to get to grips with many forward-looking issues, such as the genetic optimisation of humans, changing gender roles, heterogeneity vs. homogeneity in modern societies or the responsibility of science in social



Award-winning: The “Heine meets Huxley” project has been awarded funds of € 5,000 by the Stifterverband and the Klaus Tschira Foundation within the “One University – One Book” initiative. HHU’s video application presents the project idea and is well worth watching.

and technical innovations – and this beyond the boundaries of the campus, since the events taking place at University House, at the University and State Library, in lecture theatres and laboratories as well as many venues in the inner city are also open to all citizens with an interest in literature and science.

The “Heine meets Huxley” series comprises six public events and three informal reading sessions entitled “Review from the Sundeck”. The individual events each follow the same three-part pattern, which can vary depending on the scientific disciplines involved: First there is a short summary and a reading then a subject-related part (lecture, debate, panel discussion, interview with experts, etc.). Interactive elements,

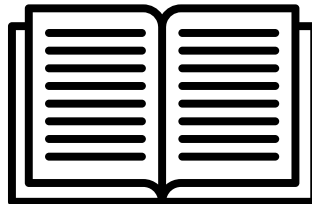
Reading copies all around the campus

such as workshops, speed dating or polls, bring the readers on board. An exhibition, film evening and seminars for students round off the individual activities. Lehmanns, the new campus bookstore, will put together a table with books by or related to Huxley and literary dystopias. “From the middle of June onwards, reading copies in English and German will be available throughout the campus, at University House and in the University Library and our Instagram challenge as well as our guerrilla poster campaign with selected quotes from the book will hopefully encourage people to pick ‘Brave New World’ up (again) and explore the novel from different angles. Kick-off is on the 16th of July. The launch event at University House will focus on biotechnology and reproductive medicine – we’ll outline the state of research together with experts and ask whether we in fact want that of which we are actually capable,” says Madlen Kazmierczak.

► **Further information about the project:** [hhu.de/HmH](https://www.hhu.de/HmH)
The idea behind HHU’s project is presented in its video application (<https://youtu.be/5Az3iA1g43E>).

Translating is not a means to an end but a creative act

“Literary Translation” has been a
degree programme at HHU for 30 years



About 400 students have been enrolled on the “Literary Translation” degree programme since it was first introduced. Not only is the translation of literary works taught within this popular subject, research into the social function of translations is also conducted.

BY VICTORIA MEINSCHÄFER

Is it still necessary, in times of ever-advancing digitalisation, to train translators? Won't they be replaced in a few years by increasingly ingenious translation software? For Professor Birgit Neumann, professor of Anglophone Studies and director of the Literary Translation MA programme, there is no cause for alarm: “Digital translation works for pragmatic communication and is indeed getting better and better, but it doesn't work for literature! It takes a translator to unlock ambivalent language; a computer will never be able to do that.” Against this background and in her view, prospects remain good for graduates of the “Literary Translation” programme, which was introduced at HHU thirty years ago.

Theory and practice go hand in hand in this programme, which was originally conceived as a diploma course. At the

time it was set up, it was the only one of its kind in Germany. Although it has since found imitators, its decidedly practical focus remains a unique feature.

Programme based on the study of literary texts

As the programme's initiator Professor Fritz Nies (Romance Languages and Literatures) explained at the press conference for the programme's launch in 1988, the objective was to “embark along the path from skilled craft to applied science.” Diploma courses for technical translating already existed; the new programme now filled the “market niche” for fiction



“TRANSLATORS ARE AT THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN CULTURES; THEY ARE CULTURE EXPERTS.”

Dr. Vera Elisabeth Gerling, Romance Languages and Literatures scholar

Photo 1, 2: HHU Archive



1: Discovery of the computer as a useful tool for literary translations shortly after the start of the study programme: Sanda Grätz teaches students the necessary skills.

2: Press conference in 1988 for the launch of the new "Literary Translation" study programme (from the left): Professor Wilhelm Gössmann, Professor Fritz Nies, former president Professor Gert Kaiser, Professor Albert-Reiner Glaap

3: Erich Fried at the launch event for the "Literary Translation" study programme

4: Panel discussion at the Heinrich Heine Institute: Professor Birgit Neumann, Professor Ottmar Ette (University of Potsdam), Professor Volker C. Dörr, Stanislaw Straszburger (author), Larissa Bender (translator and journalist), Dr. Vera Elisabeth Gerling



Photo: Rolf Willhardt



Photo: Özlem Saral

“IF THE AUTHOR WANTS TO CREATE A FEELING OF FOREIGNNESS THEN THE TRANSLATION MUST DO SO AS WELL.”

Professor Birgit Neumann, professor of Anglophone Studies and Literary Translation



In May, Michael Walter was awarded the 2018 European Translation Prize sponsored by the City of Offenburg and the Hubert Burda Foundation. One of his recent translations is Henry James' novel "The Ambassadors". In an interview with the taz newspaper, Walter said he was convinced that "It was the hardest thing I've ever done. I've sworn to myself: No more Henry James! Not even for a million dollars!"

in the broadest sense. By contrast to other translation courses, the one in Düsseldorf was based from the very beginning on the study of literary texts. "The reputation of literary translators has grown considerably over the last years," says Dr. Vera Elisabeth Gerling, Romance Languages and Literatures scholar, who herself was one of the programme's first graduates and is today a lecturer and researcher in this field. "Nowadays, a book's translator is by all means visible and the quality of the translation often mentioned in reviews. When we first started out, who'd done the translation wasn't even mentioned in some books," she says. Alumni from the "Literary Transla-

a best practice example of the interdisciplinary cooperation between our departments and – measured against the number of places – one of our most popular MA programmes. Students are often so capable that many of them are commissioned by prestigious publishing companies even before they've earned their degree."

In Gerling's experience, "translators are at the intersection between cultures; they are culture experts". This also became apparent at the anniversary conference entitled "Literature, Migration and Translation" funded by the German Research Foundation and the Association of Friends and Benefactors of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, which Gerling organised in March together with her colleagues Birgit Neumann und Professor Volker Dörr (German Studies). For example: Larissa Bender, literary translator for Arabic, journalist and Syria expert, was one of the guests in the panel discussion. "Her example shows how translators can also perform an important social function not just through the translation of literary works," says Gerling.

Hierarchies between author and translator are questioned

tion" programme also make an active contribution to creating greater awareness of the translator, for example as leading members of the Association of Literary Translators (VdÜ).

Professor Ulrich Rosar, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, is very pleased with the interdisciplinary programme as well as the budding translators' employment prospects: "The MA programme in 'Literary Translation' is a tremendous success for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. It's

Birgit Neumann is convinced as well: "Translation processes are playing a more important role today than ever before." In her view, translators have a quite different status today than they did thirty years ago when the programme was launched: "Translating is as creative an act as the writing of the original," says Neumann, referring to how translation studies are nowadays regarded. "Translating is not a means to an end and the hierarchies between author and translator are being increasingly questioned." Moreover, she observes again



and again how some books only come into the limelight in the author's home country after they have been translated into other languages: "That's the case, for example, with

Elena Ferrante's best-sellers, which only attracted greater attention in Italy after they had already been successful in Anglo-America and Germany and featured in book reviews." That a translation always goes hand in hand with a new creative interpretation, explains Neumann, is demonstrated, for example, by Deborah Smith's English version of Han Kang's novel "The Vegetarian": "The text is edgier in the English translation, the narrator more prominent than in the more reserved original."

Whether older original texts should be adjusted to modern parlance to make them more understandable is a subject of controversial debate amongst philologists. In the case of

translations, it is quite a different matter: Here it is mostly assumed that translations age faster than originals and new ones should therefore be produced after a certain time. Susanne Lange's award-winning new translation of Don Quixote can be cited here as a successful example. "A new translation of Gabriel García Márquez' 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' appeared last year which is very different from the first version," says Vera Gerling. "The previous translation by Curt Meyer-Clason from 1970 presents the story in an exoticising and overpowering language, whereas the language Dagmar Ploetz uses in her new translation is more journalistic and factual – and matches García Márquez' linguistic style better."

Opening up of the book market

That commercial interests also often play a role became apparent when the rights to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's classic "The Little Prince" entered the public domain: German publishing houses offered eight translations in 2015, "which are partly very different," says Gerling, "depending on whether the book was intended to be marketed for children or as an almost philosophical oeuvre for adults."

The literature to be translated has also changed greatly over the course of the thirty years. Nowadays, a lot of post-colonial books are translated. "The book market has noticeably opened up to literature from English-speaking and French-speaking countries," says Neumann, who herself is



The new translation of Gabriel García Márquez' novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" is very different from the first one: "In Meyer-Clason's version, protagonist José Arcadio Buendía is described as follows: His 'un-curbed imagination constantly overtrumped nature's inventiveness'. Ploetz, by contrast, writes that his 'ruthless power of imagination always surpassed nature's ingenuity'. The new translation presents to us a new and less exoticising interpretation of magic realism," explains Vera Gerling.



◀ Nine bilingual volumes in the series “Düsseldorf übersetzt” (“Translated in Düsseldorf”) have appeared so far – a vehicle for students to enter the marketplace with their first translations.

engaged in research on postcolonial literature and cultural exchange.

Moreover, many migration literature classics are currently being translated because publishing houses see a market for them in Germany in view of the present refugee situation. This holds true, for example, for Samuel Selvon’s novel “The Lonely Londoners”, which has been translated into German by Miriam Mandelkow. The same can be said for Aimé Césaire, whose “Discourse on Colonialism”, his major work that appeared in 1950, was first translated in 1968 by Monika Kind. Last year, a new, annotated translation by Heribert Becker was published. “This shows that such fundamentally important postcolonial works take on new meaning in today’s times and in light of the current handling of the ‘foreign’. Accordingly, the inhuman inequalities that are an outcome of colonial history are receiving attention again,” explains Gerling.

What is a good translation?

At what point in time is a translation commissioned? What function does it have for literature or society in a country when it appears in the language of that country? These are also questions with which budding literary translators must get to grips.

When is a translation successful? “When you don’t notice it”, might be the obvious answer. Gerling and Neumann, however, warn against producing translations that are too smooth

or accommodating: “If the author wants to create a feeling of foreignness then the translation must do so as well.” That is exactly what HHU students learn; translations spawn changes that always go beyond that which already exists and set cultures in motion.



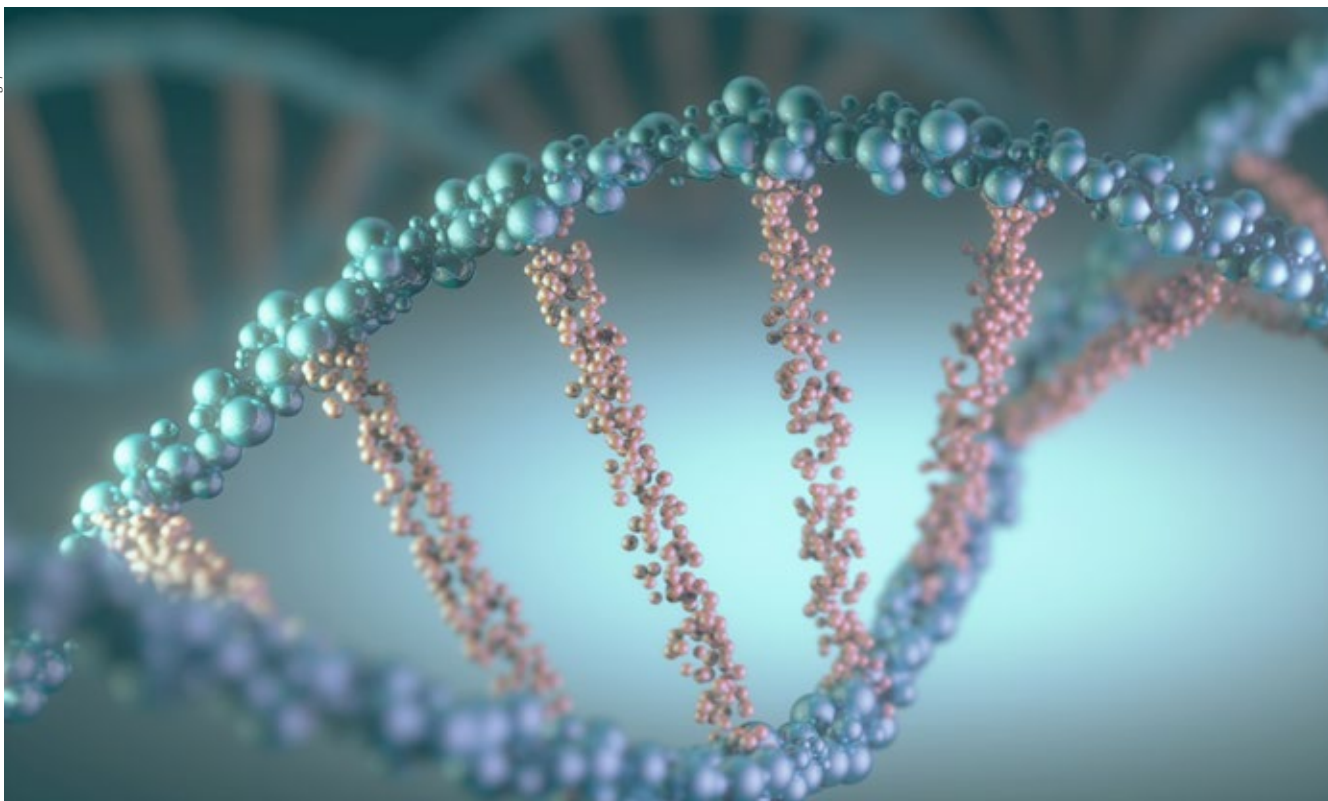
Theresa Benkert has just produced her first published translation parallel to completing her degree: A German version of Claire Gondor’s “Le Coeur à l’Aiguille” which has appeared in Wagenbach Verlag. What did the course teach her in this context? “It sensitised me towards pitfalls and traps and taught me at the same time that there’s a solution to every problem if you just look for it long enough. And translation theories guided me in many of my decisions.”

The “**Literary Translation**” study programme has run at Heinrich Heine University since 1988 and has a specific focus that is unique nationwide. Initially offered as a diploma course, “Literary Translation” has been a MA degree programme since 2008. Students not only come from throughout Germany, many international students are also enrolled. The target language is always German; source languages are English, French, Spanish and Italian. Around 400 students have been enrolled on the programme in the thirty years; many of them are today successful and partly well-known translators. Familiar names are Claudia Feldmann (over 80 book translations, including the Artemis Fowl series by Eoin Colfer), Andrea Fischer (over 50 book translations, including Michael Chabon), Marieke Heimburger (over 40 book translations, including Jussi Adler-Olsen and Rowan Coleman) and Sonja Finck (2006 André Gide Translation Prize of the DVA Foundation; she translates works by authors including Kamel Daoud, Annie Ernaux).

Taking genome decoding to the next level

Cologne, Bonn and Düsseldorf set up new centre of competence in the field of genomics

Photo: iStockphoto/AdobeStock



BY FRIEDA BERG AND SUSANNE DOPHEIDE

In March 2018, the University of Cologne (lead partner), the University of Bonn and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf were granted funding by the German Research Foundation to set up a joint centre of excellence – the “West German Genome Center” (WGCC). With this network, the universities want to help support the life sciences as well as medicine in Germany with state-of-the-art technologies in the area of genome research and innovative computer-assisted processes.

DNA sequencing is a method for decoding genetic information. It has revolutionised the biosciences and sounded in the genomics era. Since 1995, it has been possible through DNA

sequencing to analyse the genome of many thousands of different organisms. Today it is one of the key analysis methods in life science research.

The new centre will be equipped with apparatus for what is known as next-generation sequencing (NGS), with which the entire genome of a biological sample can be mapped. NGS is a particularly efficient method, which through parallel sequencing can “read” a very high number of DNA fragments. To explain, let us think back to our biology lessons: The genetic information of an organism is made up of millions of nucleotides. Each nucleotide is composed of a sugar and a phosphate group as well as one of four different bases: Adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G) or thymine (T). In each case, three bases



◀ Genome section – genetic information is stored in the chromosomes.

form a unit and code for an amino acid. As the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology explains: All vital information is encoded in the order (the sequence) of the bases.

The intention is to place the genomic data collected at the disposal of a large group of scientific users. The WGGC additionally offers a range of other services for researchers: Search for experts, scientific consulting and further training, help with writing funding proposals and networking opportunities. The centre's data will not only fuel basic research in the field of biology in many ways but also make a major contribution to advancing application-related biomedicine, with a view to improving molecular diagnostics, solving further pathogenetic mechanisms and thus also to developing customised therapies in personalised medicine. In this context, it will be possible in the framework of diagnostic tests to deliver important information through genetic analysis, for example about the effectiveness, tolerance and dose of a cancer drug for a specific patient.

Broader range of methods

HHU is responsible above all for a special technique known as long-read NGS, which is used to analyse particularly long DNA fragments that then also deliver information about structural changes in the DNA. Professor Dagmar Wieczorek, the WGGC's deputy spokesperson in Düsseldorf, says: "With long-read NGS technology and the corresponding bioinformatics tools, HHU is expanding the range of genome analysis methods at the WGGC."

Professor Klaus Pfeffer, Heinrich Heine University vice-president and WGGC member, lists the other cooperation partners alongside the three universities: "Also involved in the WGGC are RWTH Aachen University, the University of Duisburg-Essen, Saarland University, the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases, which are now establishing an internationally visible centre of expertise in the field of genome research."

Attractive conditions for research

Professor Nikolaj Klöcker, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Heinrich Heine University, sees in the new centre a particularly promising institution for the Rhineland as an important location for science and research as well as for HHU itself: "Being part of such a prominent consortium strengthens our university medicine's role in the international knowledge community. At the same time, the WGGC offers very attractive conditions for life science research at HHU."

The WGGC will receive funding to the tune of around € 5.3 million with an additional 22 % flat-rate contribution for overheads, first of all for three years. It is the first central infrastructure facility for bioinformatics, genome research and high-performance computing (HPC).

► **Contact:** Professor Dagmar Wieczorek, deputy spokesperson of the West German Genome Center, Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Dagmar.Wieczorek@med.uni-duesseldorf.de

ERC Advanced Grant for Professor Stephan Schiller

High accolade for HHU researcher in EU competition

BY ARNE CLAUSSEN

In the coming five years, the European Union will fund work conducted by experimental physicist and Düsseldorf researcher Professor Stephan Schiller to the tune of € 2.5 million. With these funds, he wants to determine fundamental physical constants and verify physical laws by means of molecular ion spectroscopy at Heinrich Heine University. In May of this year, Professor Schiller was awarded one of the prestigious Advanced Grants, with which the European Research Council (ERC) acknowledges high-calibre researchers in a tough selection process; success in this procedure is a mark of special recognition.

What keeps the world together on the inside? What forces are at work and how strong are they? Exploring such topics often requires a lot of sophisticated equipment – such as kilometre-long particle accelerators at the European re-

search centre CERN or huge astronomical telescopes. By contrast, Professor Stephan Schiller from HHU's Institute of Experimental Physics wants to pursue a different route: He wants to investigate the properties of matter with tabletop experiments but of the greatest possible accuracy. To this end, the matter should as cold

Complementary approach

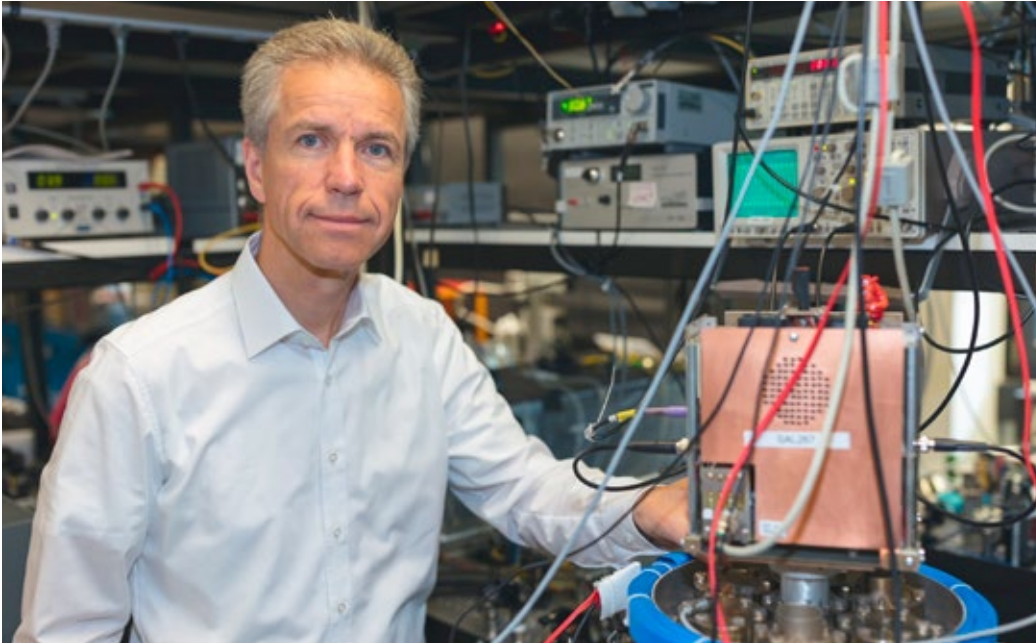
as possible and best if in a nearly immobile state with almost zero energy. The method is thus a complementary approach to large-scale experiments where enormous energies come into play.

Professor Schiller uses ultra-precise spectroscopy to study molecular ions. For this he selected the simplest molecules, comprising only

“OUR APPROACH IS AN ELEGANT AND NOVEL ALTERNATIVE TO THE METHODS USED SO FAR TO MEASURE FUNDAMENTAL PHYSICAL CONSTANTS AND FORCES.”

Professor Stephan Schiller, experimental physicist

Photo: Christoph Kawan



◀ Professor Stephan Schiller pursues new routes in experimental physics.

two protons (nuclei of hydrogen atoms) and a single electron. The two nuclei in the molecule oscillate against each other at a precisely defined frequency; the value depends on the mass of the nuclei, of the electron and on the strength and type of the forces between the three particles. Professor Schiller and his colleagues showed theoretically that it should be possible to measure this oscillation extremely accurately, with a relative error as small as one part in 10 million billion; this corresponds to the ratio of 1 mm to the distance between Earth and Pluto.

Since so far the degree of inaccuracy is a million times higher, there is clearly tremendous potential for improvement. Professor Schiller and his team will try to harvest it and also aim to determine several fundamental physical constants more accurately than has so far been the case.

Does a “fifth force” exist?

He is also using the same measurement approach to examine another fundamental question: Could it be that a “fifth force” exists? Modern physics is based on the standard model of four fundamental forces: Gravitational, electromagnetic, weak nuclear and strong nuclear. Within the scope of the current level of measurement accuracy achieved in experiments

worldwide, there is no evidence of a fifth fundamental force. “However, with our new method we are in a position to take a far more accurate look,” says Professor Schiller. If the slightest deviations in the measured oscillation frequency from the theoretical prediction on the basis of the four standard forces were determined, this could indicate the existence of a fifth force.

“Our approach is an elegant and novel alternative to the methods used so far to measure fundamental physical constants and forces,” explains Professor Schiller and continues: “We’re performing an important task because we’re testing independently whether the results of other types of experiments are correct and we can increase their accuracy further.” The ERC will fund this work over the next five years with a total of € 2.5 million. With these funds, Professor Schiller will support several doctoral and early career researchers as well as purchase new measuring equipment.

University management congratulated Professor Schiller on this outstanding accomplishment. Professor Peter Westhoff, Vice-President for Research and Technology Transfer: “Being awarded an ERC Advanced Grant is a significant achievement and above all signals the particular scientific quality and creativity of the project proposal. This bears witness to the pole position of physics at Heinrich Heine University and is special recognition for Stephan Schiller.”



The European Research Council is the European Union’s central body for the funding of ground-breaking and pioneering research by individual researchers. The ERC encourages scientists from the EU to submit proposals for highly ambitious research projects within a competitive procedure.

WILLEM C. VIS MOOT

Düsseldorf amongst
the world's eight
best universities

Photo: private

The successful Düsseldorf team in New York (from the left): Nils Wassiljew, coach Jakob Stachow, Murat Oktay, Kathrin Leitges, Kim Roegels, Chiara Gayk, Tim Fischer and coach Thomas Scherer.

BY THOMAS SCHERER AND JAKOB STACHOW

Taking part in the prestigious Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot has a long tradition at the Faculty of Law. HHU has sent a team to this international moot competition, where the language is English, for over a decade now.

This year, Chiara Gayk, Kathrin Leitges, Kim Roegels, Tim Fischer, Murat Oktay and Nils Wassiljew took part in the Vis Moot, which runs over the course of the entire winter semester. They were coached by research associates Tho-

mas Scherer and Jakob Stachow. Their academic supervisors were Professor Katharina Lugani and Professor Christian Kersting.

Fictional case about chocolate cakes

The fictional case they had to handle centred on a breach of contract related to a delivery of chocolate cakes that contained cocoa beans

which had not been cultivated sustainably. By getting to grips with the problems embedded in the case, the students gained an insight into international arbitration and the convention on the international sale of goods (UN sales law) – legal fields that play a more subordinate role in legal studies but which are very relevant in practice. The students learn both the fundamentals needed to draft written pleadings as well as to present a case orally in court. In the case of the Vis Moot, this is an arbitral tribunal composed of experienced and renowned lawyers. Many practice pleadings take place at the offices of law firms that lend their strong support to the HHU team, both in terms of expertise as well as financial resources.

Preparatory round in New York

Thanks to this commitment, it was possible for the Düsseldorf team to take part again for the first time in a long while in the Vis East in Hong Kong, in addition to a preparatory event (known as a pre-moot) in New York and final rounds in Vienna. The Vis East is a competition equivalent to the Vis Moot in Vienna. The final rounds are arranged like a football tournament: In what are known as ‘general rounds’ a team has to collect sufficient points to come under the best 32 or 64 teams. The winner is then determined in knockout rounds. The Düsseldorf team was able to assert itself amongst 128 teams in six rounds of court hearings in Hong Kong between 11 and 18 March 2018 and ultimately made the top 16 of all competing teams.

Tremendous success in Vienna

With this success under their belt, the young law students flew straight from Hong Kong back to Europe to the major final rounds in Vienna, in which from 23 to 29 March 2018

over 360 universities from throughout the whole world took part. After five days of intensive hearings, they were able to repeat Heinrich Heine University’s unique success from 2010 and fought their way to join the last eight universities before having to admit defeat to the National Law School of India from Bangalore. Nonetheless a tremendous success in the overall analysis: Together with the University of Passau, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf came off as the most successful German university in the Viennese competition.

About the Moot

The Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot is an international moot court competition held annually in Vienna since 1994. It is named after Willem Cornelis Vis (1924–1993), a recognised expert in international commercial transactions and dispute settlement procedures, who was born in Utrecht and amongst others read law at Oxford University.

The competition attracts over 300 law teams from around the globe and is the largest moot in the world in this field. The objective of the Vis Moot is to train the legal experts of tomorrow and foster study in the area of international commercial arbitration as well as the use of arbitration to resolve business disputes. The moot centres on a specific problem, which is based on an international sales transaction under the “United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods” and other uniform international commercial law, and consists of submitting written memoranda for both sides of the dispute (i.e. the claimant and the respondent).

It is organised by the “Association for the Organization and Promotion of the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot”.



Born without a silver spoon?

(In)equality of opportunities in Germany



BY CAROLIN GRAPE

There can be a lot of injustice in the educational system. Why? Because social background is a determining factor in which education we get. Behavioural economist Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch has examined to what extent the start in life of children in Germany depends on their family's socio-economic status, but also how to foster equality in an effective and cost-efficient way.

It is a long-known fact that IQ is influenced to a considerable extent by the parental home. New, on the other hand, is the recognition that children from families with high or low socio-economic status also differ systematically in

terms of patience, willingness to take risks, altruism and trust. These personality traits not only have a positive impact on the course of a person's life and career but also on society's united co-existence. It is, for example, well documented that more patient individuals on average not only possess significantly higher educational qualifications, income and assets but are also healthier. Reason enough for current economics research to bring them greater to the fore in order to understand better how inequality develops.

“Over a period of several years, we accompanied about 600 families in Bonn and Cologne with different socio-economic backgrounds. On the

“IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT EDUCATION AND INCOME INFLUENCE HOW PARENTS BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR INTERACTION WITH THEIR OFFSPRING.”

Professor Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch, behavioural economist

basis of questionnaires, interviews and behavioural experiments, we measured in detail the personality traits of children and their parents. We were able to show that primary school children of well-off parents behave in a far more patient and altruistic manner and are less likely to be risk-seeking than their peers of the same age with a lower family income and level of education. This means that the relevant personal characteristics are already partly determined in childhood and might be an important factor for how marked social inequality is,” explains Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch.

Personality is determined early on

Especially in their combination, it is highly probable that these personality traits impair the educational success and later employment prospects of children from families with a low socio-economic status. This means that a possible reason for the often lamented lack of social mobility lies in the development of a child’s personality, which in turn is dependent on his or her parental home. Thus the personality differences identified in children depending on their family status are found again on a quite similar scale in adults too. This suggests that it is not a matter of just a transitory phenomenon in childhood, but that inequality in the sense of

systematic differences is already “cemented” in personality development at an early stage.

Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch: “In response to this, we examined what might be the cause of the differences in personality traits we observed. It seems likely that education and income influence how parents bring up their children and their interaction with their offspring. Better educated and wealthier parents are thus more consistent overall in their children’s upbringing and more attentive towards them. Although they on average spend less time with their children, this time is more concentrated. In this way, they are better at investing more such resources in the development of personality traits in their children that are very important in their later life.”

But there is also some good news: Some gaps in children’s personality development that can be attributed to their family background can be reduced or even closed if efforts are made at an early stage to strengthen the personality of socially disadvantaged children. Han-

Mentoring helps

nah Schildberg-Hörisch explains: “Mentoring can reduce a child’s unequal start in life. This is the aim of the ‘Balü and You’ mentoring programme. A group of children from families with a low socio-economic status was selected



Photo: private
 Professor Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch is examining (in)equality in Germany.

at random and took part in the programme for a year. A voluntary mentor visited them once a week and undertook various activities with them, ranging from discussing with them to reading, cooking and doing sports together to going to the zoo. The aim of the programme was not to improve the children's academic performance at school but to develop and strengthen their personality. After a year, we could see that these children behaved far more altruistically and exhibited more trust and in this respect had caught up with their peers with well-off parents. This effect also remained evident two years after the end of the mentoring programme. The voluntary and thus to a major degree altruistic mentors in the programme are thus clearly able to compensate for a lack of 'prosocial stimuli' in the parental home."

Another important result: The number of primary school children with a lower socio-economic status that later go to grammar school rises by about 11 % if these children take part

in the mentoring programme. This reduces the difference in the ratio of grammar school pupils between children from families with higher and those with lower socio-economic status by about a third.

Greater equality

With costs of about € 1,000 per child and year, the mentoring programme is very cheap compared to other interventions or annual child allowance. Overall, these results confirm the tremendous potential that support in early childhood offers for more equality and social mobility. "Even if the passing on of personality traits within a family plays a certain role, interventions that enrich the social environment of disadvantaged children can considerably reduce the unequal start of being born without a silver spoon," argues Schildberg-Hörisch.



Within the mentoring programme "Balu and You", a voluntary mentor visited a group of children once per week for a year.

Personality traits, such as patience, trust or willingness to take risks, have a positive impact on a person's journey through life.



Photo: istockphoto.com - FatCamera

“Yale-Düsseldorf Working Group on Philosophy and Media” set up

Connecting media studies with philosophy and linking German and American research on these topics: With the “Yale-Düsseldorf Working Group on Philosophy and Media” he has set up with his American colleague Paul North, Assistant Professor Martin Doll from HHU has built several bridges in one go. And the first workshop in Yale in April showed that there is a lot of interest on all fronts.

“The idea is to question terminology and assumptions that are obvious in the one discipline from the perspective of the other,” explains Doll. “In this way, we are initiating a dialogue between the two autonomous subjects. Gilbert Simondon’s book ‘On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects’ proved a suitable vehicle for this.” That the book which appeared in 1958 and picked up the debate underway at that time on automation and cybernetics can also serve as a basis for discussing current problems soon became clear to all the participants in the workshop. “You gain the impression that Simondon’s reflections on psychosocial individuation and technology have waited for their time to come and now it has,” says Doll. “With the aid of his

Fresh look at current developments

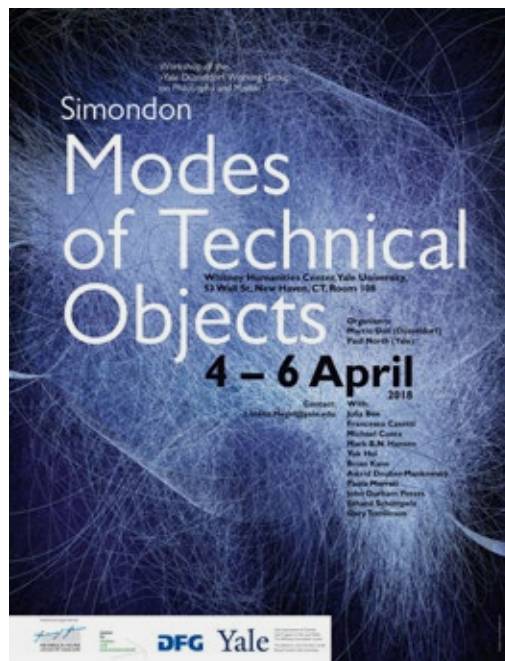
book, we were able to reflect quite differently on current developments in media technology. Today’s demonisation of artificial intelligence is no different to the demonisation of robots in the 1950s.” Short presentations by the some twenty researchers alternated with discussion sessions in the workshops. Not only philosophers and media experts took part, representatives of Sound Studies, respectively of Musicology and German Studies also came to the two-day event. “We all took away with us

from the workshop a different understanding of Simondon’s book.”

Thanks to generous arrangements on the part of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the financial support of the German Research Foundation, Doll was able to spend three months at the elite university in the USA in the framework of a fellowship programme and had access to all libraries and databases.

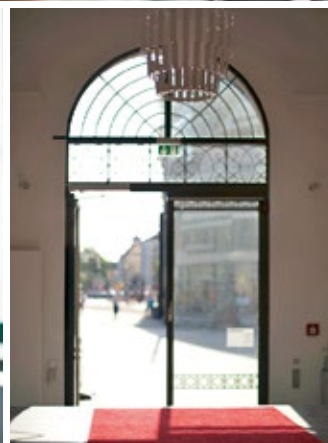
Next year: Kant

In the course of their further collaboration, Doll and North are planning a workshop entitled “Artificial Experience” and want to draw on Kant in this context. “What does it mean if we credit technical systems with being able to experience things?” says Doll, summarising his thoughts. The next workshop is planned for the autumn of 2019 – this time in Düsseldorf. V.M.



Poster: Organizer

◀ Doll and North invited researchers from different disciplines to get to grips with Simondon’s book.



University House

University House was placed at the disposal of Heinrich Heine University by the van Meeteren Foundation. Its purpose is to provide information and advice as well as foster an exchange between science, culture and education. In the framework of a large spectrum of events, the University offers local citizens the possibility to experience here cutting-edge research as well as its results and shares university life with the city.

Further information, programme, bookings:

University House
Schadowplatz 14
40212 Düsseldorf
Tel. +49 211 81-10345
Email hdu@hhu.de
www.hdu.hhu.de

Director: Prof. Dr. Georg Pretzler Deputy Director / Programme Development: Dr. Christoph auf der Horst Event Planning and Support: Angelika Kumpernas M. A., Susanne van Putten