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## **MIREES STUDENTS' REPORT ON THE 2013 ASN WORLD CONVENTION**

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On April 18-20 a group of MIREES students – Cécile Moore, Laura Valauskaite, Taras Fedirko and Peter Naderer – and MIREES faculty took part in the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities hosted by Columbia University's Harriman Institute in New York City. The ASN Convention is one of the largest interdisciplinary venues for scholars to present their research in over 140 panels on the Balkans, Central Europe and the Baltic, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Central Asia and Eurasia, the Caucasus, Turkey, China, and Nationalism Studies. Our participation in the ASN, on equal terms with established scholars and PhD students, granted us an opportunity to gain valuable feedback about our research and for once become insiders in the scholarly academic world.

With the area-centred research profile of MIREES, the ASN convention turned out to be a scholarly venue suiting our research particularly well. Although the main focus of the Convention is on issues of nationality, ethnicity and identity, the recent history of former socialist states has created a strong association between these topics and the regions of South East and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Therefore, the Convention had a variety of disciplinary, thematic and regional panels broad enough to become a place of meeting for scholars of disciplines as diverse as social history and business studies, political science and anthropology.

All of us had the opportunity to present a paper based on our thesis research in one of the many panels of the Convention.

Cécile Moore, who carried out her mobility period at Corvinus University of Budapest, presented a paper titled "The renaming of public space in Budapest: the divided politics of contemporary Hungarian identity" in the panel Culture, Media and Identity Construction in Central Europe.

Laura Valauskaite explored the issue of political culture in Lithuania and presented a paper called "Global civil society versus radical movements: challenges to political culture in Lithuania" at the panel on "Extremism and Nationalism in Central and South East Europe".

Taras Fedirko presented his research on the role of mundane bureaucratic practices and informal relations in enabling corruption in Ukrainian administrative bureaucracy, while Peter Naderer's original study focused on the impact of authoritarian rule on Chechen youth.

The Convention's rich panel and film screening program made it possible for us not only to present our work to the expert audience, but also to visit panel presentations of the cutting edge research and discussions on newest books on the regions and topics we study. We were a few master's students among what would have otherwise been a group of established researchers. It was a challenge as well as a great pleasure to become for three days a part of this international collective. Laura said that she was particularly excited with having a direct feedback on her research from world-known scholars, sharing her academic ideas and gaining confidence in her research skills. For Cecile, the most valuable aspect of Convention was that this experience contributed to our personal growth as we compared ourselves with other, more mature, researchers, and trained our skills in public speaking. During the conference Peter participated in an ad-hoc roundtable discussion on the connection of the tragic bombings in Boston to recent developments in Chechnya; he strengthened his professional contacts with fellow experts in the field. For Taras, coming to the US for the Convention allowed to participate also in a scholarly workshop on social and political transformations in Ukraine at the North-western University in Chicago.

Informal communication at the Convention turned out to be as valuable the panels. At receptions and during their late-night informal continuations, we socialized with scholars, students and Columbia University staff. We stroke new friendships, and came back home with more followers on Twitter and bunches of business cards. Last but not the least, we took long strolls in the flourishing Central Park, and along the streets of Harlem, Brooklyn Heights, East Village and Soho striving with life. We will long remember this spring visit to the vibrant New York city.

We would like to thank MIREES faculty and staff for their support. Without their encouragements and financial backing by the University of Bologna's School of Political Science our participation in the Convention would not be possible.

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