

# Anneliese Maier Research Awards 2018

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By Ingrid Piller | September 16, 2018 | News

The awards ceremony and research symposium for the Anneliese Maier Research Awards took place in Berlin from September 11 to 13, 2018. I was honoured to attend as one of eight international researchers to receive this year's Anneliese Maier Research Award.

The [Anneliese Maier Research Award](#) is a life-time achievement award that is presented by the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation to leading researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the award seeks to help promote the internationalisation of the humanities and social sciences in Germany.

Each Anneliese Maier Research Award is valued at €250,000 and is granted to outstanding humanities scholars and social scientists from outside Germany who are nominated by collaborative partners at German universities and research institutions. The award is designed to finance research collaboration over a period of up to five years with colleagues in Germany.

[This year's eight award winners](#) were selected from a total of 111 nominees from 30 countries. At the research symposium accompanying the award ceremony proper, each awardee presented their research. It was inspiring to learn about truly pioneering research grappling with universal questions of the human condition as well as fundamental social challenges of our time.

Is there a connection between the Global Financial Crisis and domestic violence?



The 2018 Anneliese Maier Research Award Recipients (Image: Humboldt-Stiftung/Jens Jeske)

Yes, says Professor [Sylvia Walby](#) (Lancaster University; Universität Duisburg-Essen), who explored the gender dimensions of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007 and showed how the crisis has cascaded into all realms of social life. Women have been particularly affected by the crisis, as is, inter alia, evidenced by rising rates of domestic violence in the UK.



The 2018 Anneliese Maier Research Award Winners and their sponsors and academic hosts (Image: Humboldt-Stiftung/Jens Jeske)

**Does everyone's vote count equally in a liberal democracy?**

No, says Professor [José Maurício Domingues](#) (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro; Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung; Freie Universität Berlin), who examined theories of modernity and showed that there is an oligarchical element at the heart of all liberal democracies.

**Are more and more migrants too lazy to learn**

**the language of their host society?**

No, says Professor [Ingrid Piller](#) (Macquarie University; Universität Hamburg). In my own presentation I interrogated the meaning of migrant linguistic integration. While language learning is increasingly constructed as a relatively banal matter of individual responsibility, it is in reality a highly complex process that is accomplished in interaction.

**Should you always trust your own senses?**

No, says Professor [Pascal Mamassian](#) (École Normale Supérieure de Paris; Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), who researches visual perception. In his talk he explored problems of meta-cognition: How good are we at evaluating our own cognition? How good are we at estimating the validity of our own interpretations? In a series of striking experiments he showed that we are certainly not as good as most of us like to think.

**Is gossip helpful in moral decision making?**

Yes, says Professor [Douglas Cairns](#) (University of Edinburgh; Technische Universität Dresden). This counterintuitive finding comes from his analyses of Ancient Greek tragedies, where imagined dialogues with and about other people function as a form of distributed cognition. Basically, gossiping about other people can serve as a scaffold to explore our own emotions and thoughts.

**Did Iceland alter the course of the history of the Ottoman Empire?**

Yes, says Professor [Alan Mikhail](#) (Yale University; Otto-Friedrich Universität Bamberg). Unlikely as it may seem, tiny little Iceland fundamentally altered the course of the history of the Ottoman Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was despite the fact that it was not part of the Ottoman Empire, had no political relations with the Ottoman Empire and, in fact, few if any Ottomans knew that Iceland even existed. The explanation for this conundrum stems from the eruption of Iceland's Laki volcano in 1783, which resulted in a climate catastrophe. Volcanic activity in faraway Iceland disrupted the Indian Ocean monsoon and as a result the Nile did not flood for a few years. The consequence of that was extremely poor harvests and hence a severe food shortage. The latter led to social unrest in Egypt and the progressive collapse of Ottoman political power.

### Does it make a difference whether historical periodization is by dynasty or by century?

Yes, says Professor [Wang Hui](#) (Tsinghua University; Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), who examined the reorganization of Chinese history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from an indigenous periodization (by dynasty) to the globally uniform periodization by century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is thus not only momentous in Chinese history for the usual reasons (revolution, occupation, founding of the PRC, etc.) but also because Chinese history became globally synchronized.

### Can you just bag a gift and walk away?

No, says Professor [Annelise Riles](#) (Northwestern University; Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung Halle). The lawyer and anthropologist used Marcel Mauss' famous book *The Gift* to probe the future of the university in our inward-looking times. Gifts are a sign of trust. Therefore, they place the recipient under an obligation to live up to that trust: not only to reciprocate but also to pay it forward.



Left to right: Enno Aufderheide (Secretary General, Humboldt Foundation); Jan Louis (Vice-President, Hamburg University); Ingrid Gogolin; Ingrid Piller; Thomas Rachel (State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research) (Image: Humboldt-Stiftung/Jens Jeske)

### What's next?

It was a truly inspiring experience to be able to spend three days in the company of such remarkable people: in addition to the awardees, their academic hosts, Humboldt Fellows from around the world and representatives of the Humboldt Foundation were in attendance.

It is particularly gratifying that the funding from the Anneliese Maier Research Award will allow my sponsor, Professors [Ingrid Gogolin](#) and [Drorit Lengyel](#) from Hamburg University, and myself to act on that inspiration. The award will enable us to conduct comparative research into the language learning experiences of newly arrived migrants in Australia and Germany. In a first step we will soon be advertising a bespoke PhD scholarship for a candidate to pursue a joint PhD under our supervision at both Hamburg and Macquarie universities. Watch this space!

## Ingrid Piller vor der Verleihung der Anneliese Maier-Forschungspreise 2018



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