Thanks to the generous support of the Duke University Center for International and Global Studies I was able to participate in the summer convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), the leading organization in the field. The convention took place in Zagreb, Croatia from 14-16 June. Participation in this event was highly valuable for my professional as well as cultural development and gave me much positive emotions.

The panel in which I participated was titled as *Nature as the Battlefield: Soviet Scientific-Technological Projects from Ecological Perspective*. Although some participants of the panel could not come, we had a very productive discussion. The panel was devoted to the discussion of the late-Soviet environmentalism and its relevance today. Our common aspiration was to bring Soviet experience into today’s discussions about the Anthropocene epoch and the human-induced climate change. Why do we believe that environmental history of the long-ago collapsed state may be informative nowadays? Despite the fact that Soviet Union does not exist anymore, its specter is haunting effectively every discussion that questions the relevance of the neoliberal political economic regime. Proponents of this regime use highly simplified imagery of the Soviet history to claim that although there are many problems with the free-market capitalism, alternatives to it are even worse. According to them, these alternatives bring nothing but unfreedom, economic inefficiency, and environmental degradation. In our presentations, we discussed the work of Soviet experts and scientists, economists and industrial managers, party members and state bureaucrats who shaped the contradictory history of Eurasian environments in the second half of the twentieth century. Often conflicting and limited, their experience though clearly demonstrates that late Soviet environmental policy cannot be reduced to the ruthless “ecocide.”

In my own presentation, I was talking about the ways in which nature became an economic category in the late USSR. I traced a discussion among economists, planners, and industrial managers who debated over how natural factors influenced profits of mines and farms. This discussion made them articulate an important idea that production depended on nature, and sustainable economic development was impossible without a system of thorough environmental regulations. The feedback I received was very important for the further development of my research. Alla Bolotova (EUSP, Russia) pointed out that I used the word “nature” in a two-fold sense in my presentation without clear delineation the two meanings. On the one hand, “nature” was a category of my own analytical language and, on the other hand, the characters of my research relied on the very same word having a different conception in mind. This problematization of my approach helped to reshape my methodology and articulate my assumptions.

Our panel was also attended by young scholars Mariia Koskina (Binghamton University, USA) and Severyan Dyakonov (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland) working on parallel themes. We had a very productive discussion afterwards in an informal setting and began planning our future cooperation.

Professional interest was not the only reason why I wanted to attend the summer convention in Zagreb. I am quite passionate about modernist architecture, and especially about socialist modernism (Sovmod) that flourished in the Eastern Bloc countries after the Second World War. Zagreb was one of the major urban centers in former Yugoslavia, where several important masterpieces of that style are located. The newer parts of the University of Zagreb campus themselves are notable examples of the Sovmod urban development. In addition to that, I was truly blessed to rent an Airbnb apartment in one of the Richter’s skyscrapers. For their time, these glum concrete towers were a real breaking through in the technologies of the earthquake-resistant construction. For such a Sovmod geek as me, this was a fantastic experience!