

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	University of Linköping, Sweden
Conference Title:	Eco-Chic: Connecting Ethical, Sustainable and elite Consumption
Dates:	October 10-14
Chair:	Rivke Jaffe and Bart Barendregt
Rapporteurs:	Balázs Kiss and Matti Sintonen

General Comments

The Conference was a great achievement. The participants spoke about a new topic frequently in an exploratory way. Thereby the conference produced challenging and very relevant questions and also results of research on a recent development: the ecological sensibility as a kind of fashion.

Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

The quality of the papers was high, they were often brilliantly presented, and both educational and funny.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

Was the schedule and the atmosphere conducive to an easy exchange of information? Was there time and space for an informal discussion? Were younger researchers integrated?

Yes, the conference met these requirements. There was plenty of time to discuss the individual papers and posters and the breaks and dinners gave opportunity to discuss and network among the participants. The young researchers also appreciated the possibility to talk to the established and distinguished scholars.

Many participants considered this aspect of the conference the most rewarding one. They had been in correspondence and some had met in person before, but the majority had not met face-to-face. The atmosphere was informal and participation in discussion intensive to the very end of the conference.

Balance of Participants

Was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants? Was a balance of national groups and researchers from different (sub)fields achieved?

The gender and age balance was admirable, and for some this was the first presentation during their careers. Participants came from all around the world, with 16 affiliated with a university in the US and Canada (though often with a background elsewhere), 6 in UK. These figures show that formally the geographical balance was far from ideal; on the other hand, however, the greatest experts of the topic are mostly located in the USA, the UK and the Netherlands. The high participation fees may have played a negative role as well even though some young scholars had managed to get financial support.

Perhaps surprisingly, there was only one participant from the Nordic Countries, and none from the host Linköping University.

Most of the participants had a background in anthropology – though some approaches, such as evolutionary or other naturalistic approaches to the explanation of cultural phenomena were absent. Similarly, given that the title of the conference included ethical aspects, no deeper analysis of what ethical (as against, say, prudential) amounts to seemed to emerge. Perhaps also deeper economic analyses could have given the programme interdisciplinary depth.

Outlook and Future Developments

Will new collaborations emerge from this conference? (How) could the conference outcomes be utilized further? Are there suitable (ESF) programmes or instruments to further the work of the conference?

Different scenarios for the future were discussed during the last session and, hopefully, some will be realized. With ESF fading away, the participants did not take its schemes into account. A COST Action may be suitable scheme for the participants although with so many scholars from outside Europe, the chances of that path is less probable.

Follow-up

What immediate and long term follow-up would benefit collaborations and dialogues that may have begun at the conference?

A couple of publishers have already approached the organizers of Eco-Chic, with a publication in mind. Forward Look session: emails will be sent, and future cooperation defined.

Organisation and Infrastructure

Were venue, catering and accommodation appropriate for this conference? Were participants satisfied with the on-site administration and support?

Travelling to Linköping (there is a small airport, and Stockholm is within 2,5 hours by train) is perhaps somewhat tedious, but this did not seem to bother the participants. On the contrary, the format of spending together three intensive days was considered a good one – since there are no great competing attractions in the immediate vicinity, the participants got to know each other well.

One suggestion might be considered in the future: the contacts to Linköping University remained non-existent. To improve this it was suggested (in informal discussions) that a visit to the University might be in order. Changing the venue to the University Campus could be considered, since it would have a number of benefits. One is the fatigue that may hit after a couple of days stay inside the hotel – a ten minute walk in the morning and in the evening would do good. Another one would be the possibility of opening some of the conference sessions (e.g. the one-hour keynotes) to a wider public, at least to interested students at the university. A third one might be an improved lecture room – preferably an auditorium (and perhaps more comfortable chairs would contribute favourably). Would it be possible to organise outdoor activities.

Food was considered very good (and the soups got special mention), with everyone's tastes catered. Given that we had so little opportunity to move out (because of the tight schedule), catering was abundant.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

Overall, Eco-Chic was a success.

About ESF Research Conferences

The Scheme

This conference is part of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) Research Conferences Scheme. The Scheme aims to promote scientific excellence and frontier level research throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Conferences aim to provide leading scientists and other participants, including young researchers, with a platform to present their work, to discuss the most recent developments in their fields of research and to network.

Conference Format

The core activities should be based on lectures by invited speakers, who are leaders in their respective fields, followed by extensive discussion periods. An informal exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the lecture room, should be encouraged, and the number of sessions in the daily timetable should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for interaction between the participants. Time should be reserved for a 'Forward Look Plenary Discussion' about future developments in the field.

Participants can take all their meals together to encourage further contact and networking, which can be particularly beneficial to younger researchers who may be less outspoken in the formal lecture room setting. In order to gain optimum benefit from the conference, both the speakers and the participants are asked to stay for the whole duration.

Division of Tasks

The Conference Chair is responsible for ensuring the quality of the scientific programme through the selection and invitation of speakers, and through the selection of participants.

The ESF Conferences Unit is responsible for managing all the logistical aspects of the conference organisation, including the provision of an on-site secretariat.

Further information: www.esf.org/conferences