

# ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

## Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF-LiU
Conference Title:	In Search of Peace: Dialogues between Theories and Practices
Dates:	20-24 October 2012
Chair:	Daniela Vicherat Mattar
Rapporteur:	Wolfgang Dietrich

### General Comments

Any general comments you might have concerning the conference, your role, the scientific area covered by this conference, etc.

In general the conference has been very well prepared. All the necessary information has been provided in time. It was clear, coherent and very helpful for all participants. The team around Daniela Vicherat Mattar and Maja De Noyette was very friendly and competent. They did their best in order to make the event successful. The opportunity for interaction between invited speakers and participants during breaks and meals was definitely given. My only critique would be that the big and often rather cold lecture room at the University Campus of Norrköping was not the very best location. A warmer and smaller room with a circle of tables would have been better for this purpose. The intensity of the formal discussions might have been different in such a seminar room, where people can look into each other's eyes.

### Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

Comments on the balance and scope of the scientific programme, the scientific quality of the presentations and discussions.

There was quite a wide range in quality of the presentations, which was caused by the broad rainbow of disciplines and cultures represented. While some of the speakers, including some of the younger generation, were familiar with the current debate of Peace Studies, some others turned out to be very restricted in their concepts and understandings of peace and conflict work. This made the discussion a bit difficult, because on the one hand the less informed ones took a lot of time for their own presentations without contributing too much to enhancing the discussion on the key topics, while it was difficult to address them and respecting them in their context. However, I do not share Johan Galtung's opinion that it was a "re-inventing the wheel" conference because it is crucial for the younger generation that they can check their approaches and findings in interaction with the established colleagues. The untested is the unknown if only existing in the mind. Exchange of opinions, styles, knowledge and wisdom is crucial for the younger colleagues. And the chance for this was perfectly given. Just from a personal perspective I can say that many took the opportunity and approached me with their ideas during the informal moments.

### 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?

The organizers did their best to provide that, but the attitude of some senior participants (Galtung, Fontan) made it difficult to achieve the goal. They came late and did not expose themselves to the social dynamics. By that they converted at least parts of the planned dialogue into a sequence of monologues. This is of course not true for everyone, but in general I recommend inviting big names only if they agree to follow the rules. Showing up for a one man show and ignoring the rest is in my understanding not the purpose of such a conference and it hampers the dialogue significantly. However, having organized many events of that kind myself I know how difficult it is to make them fulfil what they may have promised.

The time frame was a bit problematic. There were slightly too many speakers and the setting at the Norrköping Campus, as already stated, created rather frontal lectures than dialogue. Thus, neither the lecture room nor the time frame provided ideal conditions for a profound public discussion. This was rather left for the informal parts. Because of the friendly atmosphere created by the organizers this informal frame was given. It allowed dialogue among and between people. It happened to the extent that the attitude of the seniors allowed it. The results may be different from case to case.

## **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?

According to the plan the balance was excellent. I just can congratulate the team to their efforts in this respect. They did their best. The conference was very well balanced in term of disciplines, gender, nationalities. Maybe the integration of the astonishingly big group of Africans could have been better. But I think these things happen on a personal level or not. It is almost impossible to plan them.

## **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?

That is possible. I met several young colleagues who are interesting for my own projects. I guess most of the seniors will say the same. A good part of the younger participants has definitely potential. Thus, the right thematic opportunity given I can see collaborations and networks growing out of this initiative. ESF can contribute to that e.g. by facilitating a follow up.

## **Follow-up**

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

I can well imagine thematically or regionally more specific topics for several meetings in which the participants of this conference serve as sort of a core group. This might regard theoretical discussions such as transnational peace philosophy, the practical application of methods such as sports, dance, music, martial arts etc. in elicitive conflict transformation, further topical or regional case studies. Respective topics have been proposed.

## **Organisation and Infrastructure**

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

The administration was excellent, perfect. I have already spoken about the lecture room, which was not ideal from my point of view. This is not criticising the Norrköping campus as such. I think a smaller room and a circle of tables would have made a great difference, and this would have been possible at the same place. Accommodation was perfectly OK, and catering is a question of personal taste. In my opinion the catering was not more than average but still good enough for such a conference. That Scandinavian gastronomy cannot compete in price and quality with the central- or southern-European seems to be more than a stereotype.

## **Summary & Overall Assessment**

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

Yes, I call this conference a success, because its main aim was the networking of younger and older generations. Though not everybody responded to that properly I think that the vast majority of the participants did. I learned a lot and I am sure this is true for anybody else who wanted to do the same. I was allowed to pass my experience to a younger group of gifted people from all over the world. I saw distinguished colleagues like Sara Cobb doing the same and I understand this as the central aim. I congratulate and thank the conference chair and ESF Conference Unit for having provided this frame.

## 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](http://www.esf.org/conferences)