

PhD Seminar Report

By Matthias Freise, Muenster University, Germany



In the run-up to the 11th International Conference, the second ISTR's PhD seminar brought together 46 students from 22 countries at the political science department in Muenster from Sunday July 20th to 22nd. Established two years ago in Siena, the seminar aims to provide doctoral students from the broad variety of third sector research with the opportunity to receive extensive intellectual and methodological advice on their doctoral research, to introduce them to main theories and developments in the field, to reflect upon publication and career strategies, and to provide a unique opportunity to network with junior and senior scholars within the international ISTR research community. For this purpose, ISTR successfully recruited a faculty team of twelve experienced researchers from different disciplines all involved in PhD education programs at their home institutions: Anna Domaradzka (Poland), Kari Steen-Johnsen (Norway), Ronelle Burger (South Africa), Ruth Phillips (Australia), Maria Radyati (Indonesia), Gabriel Berger (Argentina), Greg Witkowski (USA), Johan Hvenmark (Sweden), Naoto Yamauchi (Japan) and Matthias Freise (Germany) who also served as the local organizer of the PhD seminar. The faculty was completed by ISTR president, Wendy Earles (Australia). The seminar was sponsored by ISTR which covered the accommodation of the participants and the faculty. Furthermore, the Society was able to dedicate US \$10,000 for travel grants and covered two evening events.

The seminar started with a welcome event on Sunday, July 20th which was followed by a dinner in a restaurant at the lakeside in Muenster. The main program started the next morning. The students were divided into six thematically related working groups of six or seven participants. Each group was supervised by two members of the faculty. The three working group sessions on Monday and Tuesday morning formed the heart of the PhD Seminar. Every student had the possibility to present his PhD project and discuss key questions and theoretical and methodological issues on a peer basis with the other group members and with the faculty.

In addition to the working groups, the PhD seminar contained a keynote speech given by ISTR's president elect, Annette Zimmer, on the topic "Money Makes the World go Round! Economization and its Impact on NPOs." In her presentation, Annette Zimmer started with a closer look at the phenomenon of economization and marketization of third sector organizations which can be observed in many countries at the moment and which has been even gained moment in recent years as a consequence of the financial crises. Subsequently, she turned the attention to the civil society aspects of NPOs and focused on the nexus between nonprofits and civil society. Against this background, she referred to the so-called business talk that has entered into the NPO sector and discussed the transference of business related legitimation patterns in the light of "hybridization." Finally, she opened up the discussion whether economisation is something dangerous for nonprofits

and the sector, or – on the contrary – whether it is just a new way of signaling legitimacy. In conclusion, she predicted that third sector research will be confronted in future with two entirely separate worlds – a world of business talk oriented NPO elites who in their habits, their lifestyle as well as their aspirations are increasingly distancing themselves from the NPO-workforce, the social workers and the activists and the NPO grassroots. Annette Zimmer's speech was followed by a lively debate about the experiences of the PhD students in their home countries.

The seminar program on Monday was completed by three semi-plenary sessions the students selected according to their personal interests. In the first session, Bernard Enjolras, the editor-in-chief of *Voluntas* gave tips and tricks on how to publish in peer reviewed journals. Ruth Philips and Gabriel Berger discussed the tension between fundamental and applied research which is a very common question of third sector research. The third semi-plenary session was offered by Anna Domaradzka and Johan Hvenmark who discussed the challenge of combining scientific career and family. Since non-profit research is a rather female discipline (more than two thirds of the seminar's participants were female) it was a very important topic for many participants. The day ended with a tour through the historic city of Muenster guided by Christina Rentzsch, a PhD student from the local University, who participated in the seminar herself and competently informed the group about the historic sites like the cathedral square, the Principal market and the historical town hall where the Peace of Westphalia has been negotiated in 1648. The tour ended in a jazz club at the harbour district where the seminar had dinner and listened to a jam session. Although the local organizers failed to encourage the students to dance (as it was intended by the program) it became a long evening.

After another session of the working groups on Tuesday morning the seminar ended with a wrap up session at noon. Following, the participants went to the ISTR international conference that started immediately after the end of the PhD seminar. The results of the anonymized evaluation and the discussion in the plenum were very pleasant for the organizers. The participants liked that projects from all around the world have been included in the seminar. Furthermore, they praised the possibility of discussing their PhD projects with colleagues and experienced faculty members. Since third sector research is just a marginal aspect in many disciplines and departments many participants appreciated the opportunity of discussion and networking given in the seminar and were very much interested in a continuation of the ISTR's services for doctoral students.

The next PhD seminar will take place in the forefront of the 12th International Conference in Stockholm in June 2016.



PhD Impressions

By Iwanig Le Vaillant, PhD student in Economy, LEMNA, Nantes, France

Through this newsletter, I would like to express my appreciation to all members of the ISTR and all Münster's conference participants in July 2014.

I have excellent memories of this conference and the doctoral seminar that stood before it.

About the PhD seminar, I still recall fructuous exchanges around our work, the opportunity to compare our point of views and improve our reflections. Also I remember meeting very nice people and young dynamic researchers who were very motivated.

About the conference, I will not forget its rich scientific production. An organization like the ISTR has the advantages of its diversity. It attempts to bring together a great number of researchers from multiple disciplines. The diversity of the disciplines represented, the different cultures of the countries where the research is produced, and the theoretical frameworks used, sometimes make the understanding quite complex.

What I will retain from this experience, is the advantage represented by this great diversity; an advantage that allowed me, during the conference, to enrich my thinking through suggestions from other disciplines, other approaches. And this power, I think, is a major strength of our organization.

In conclusion, I would like to thank again the members of the jury that awarded me the prize for the best poster. I am really honored by this award.

I hope to have the opportunity to meet you again; hopefully for a new appointment in 2016 in Stockholm. Until then, good luck to all of you and "Merci encore".

By Johana Kunin, Phd student in Social Anthropology, IDAES/UNSAM-CONICET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

I really enjoyed my experience at the PhD Seminar and it will remain in my memories forever. I will never forget my colleagues of the amazing Group 1- Gwawr, John, Elizabeth, Christiane, Rosa, Itamar and Carlos. Many of us bonded not only as young scholars but also as human beings. We believed our topics "spoke" smoothly to each other. Actually many joked that we were the kind of marginal or "freak" topics' group within ISTR but one of our faculty said we were the emerging topics' people. I then felt kind of proud. I think most of us are not only intellectually but also ethically or politically committed to the subjects (not objects!) we are researching with or researching about: indigenous peoples, Indian activist groups, minority languages, activist artists' organisations, sexual so-called minorities, just to mention some of them. I really found that having 45 minutes to share and discuss my own project with colleagues and faculty was a unique and refreshing opportunity. Doing something like that with people from other countries and realities gives you new perspectives that were very enriching for me.

Last but not least, I would love to highlight the intellectual brightness of our two faculty: Anna Domaradzka and Wendy Earles. I will never forget an informal and private conversation I had with Anna about my project and a phrase Wendy told me about my project: "follow your guts!" (when I was commenting that I was hesitant about a new perspective I am currently "feeling" while conducting field research). That's why I really feel that they were great "maestras," those kind of advisors that understand you not only as a young scholar but also as a struggling human being that is

actually conducting research. That is awesome and not very common. Academia can really be a harsh place to be sometimes.

Finally I would like to acknowledge ISTR for the grant they gave me in order to assist to the conference. I could have never had done it without it.

Long live the PhD seminar!

By Ane Grubb, PhD student, Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark

United by a common interest in third sector and civil society research, 46 doctoral students from 22 different countries, at all stages of their PhD programme, had made their way to the peaceful city of Münster to exchange ideas, results and questions related to their respective research projects.

Thanks to the persistent effort of the ISTR secretariat, a hardworking group of staff and volunteers from the University of Münster, and an international panel of highly committed senior scholars, the PhD participants could enjoy an intense and well organized programme that included several academic and social highlights.

Setting the scene for two days of international and interdisciplinary exchange, the seminar was launched with a round of presentations, where one of the key organizers, Matthias Freise from the University of Münster, invited all attendees – from PhD students to senior scholars, ISTR secretariat and the president of ISTR, Wendy Earles - to present themselves in their mother tongue and then in English. Not only did this creative icebreaker reflect the truly international composition of the participants, it also indicated a wide range of research interests and approaches. Indeed, just as there seemed to be about 50 ways of getting to Münster depending on whether you came from Buenos Aires, Munich, a small village in India or Copenhagen, there seemed to be at least 50 different approaches to studying the third sector.

And yet, as it became clear during the seminar, these differences in national, disciplinary methodological and theoretical background, provided fertile grounds for challenging and constructive discussions. Whether in- or outside the seminar rooms at the University, the beautiful and calm city of Münster provided the perfect setting for elaborate conversations between doctoral students and senior faculty about everything from methodological concerns to such everyday issues as how to reconcile family life and an academic career. To several participants, these more or less formal gatherings represented a key attraction of the ISTR PhD seminar.

One key setting for the more academic discussions was the group sessions, where about nine doctoral students, grouped by research focus, took turns at presenting their work and main concerns to their peers and two moderators; a couple of senior scholars with expertise in the specific field. Each presentation was followed by constructive discussions that were steered and stimulated by relevant feedback from the moderators. To use the words of one of the moderators in my group, these discussions generally resembled that of “critical friends,” peers who make an effort to ask clarifying, curious and constructive questions – while avoiding bold bashing or useless flatter.

Certainly, 45 minutes is rarely enough to present and discuss all aspects of a PhD project, but the very possibility of presenting and discussing your work with a group of peers and senior faculty who

are equally interested in third sector topics, brought on a feeling of “meeting your tribe“- which in itself was a very rewarding experience.

Besides the group sessions another academic peak was without a doubt the inspiring and refreshingly critical keynote address given on the second day of the conference by ISTR president-elect, and Professor at the University of Münster, Annette Zimmer. Professor Zimmer suggested that the distinctiveness of civil society and nonprofit organizations might be under siege as the steering mechanisms and linguistic concepts hitherto inherent to the market increasingly seem to infiltrate other sectors. Professor Zimmer encouraged all scholars of the third sector to pay particularly attention to these tendencies towards marketization and “business talk,” as they may have serious consequences; not only in terms of new management strategies in the NPO’s, but with regards to the continue distinctiveness of the third sector.

Coming back to the social highlights, at least two should be mentioned here. First of all, the joint walk to the fascinating harbor district of Münster. Under the skilled guidance of a PhD student from the University of Münster, the entire group of doctoral students was taken on an informative tour through the parks and streets of the new and old parts of the city, finishing with dinner and - , to quote the official programme: “freaky dancing at Hot Jazz Club.”

Another social highlight worth mentioning was the PhD party, that took place during the conference. Besides a lot more of more or less freaky dancing and talking, rumour has it that the whole party ended with a barbecue in the early hours of the next day.

It has already been a couple of months since the last goodbyes were said in Münster, but the conversations and exchange of references, pictures and useful advice on how to survive as a doctoral student have lived on in a virtual forum on Facebook. And fortunately we will see each other again – in real life – in less than two years at the ISTR conference in Stockholm.

Till then!

